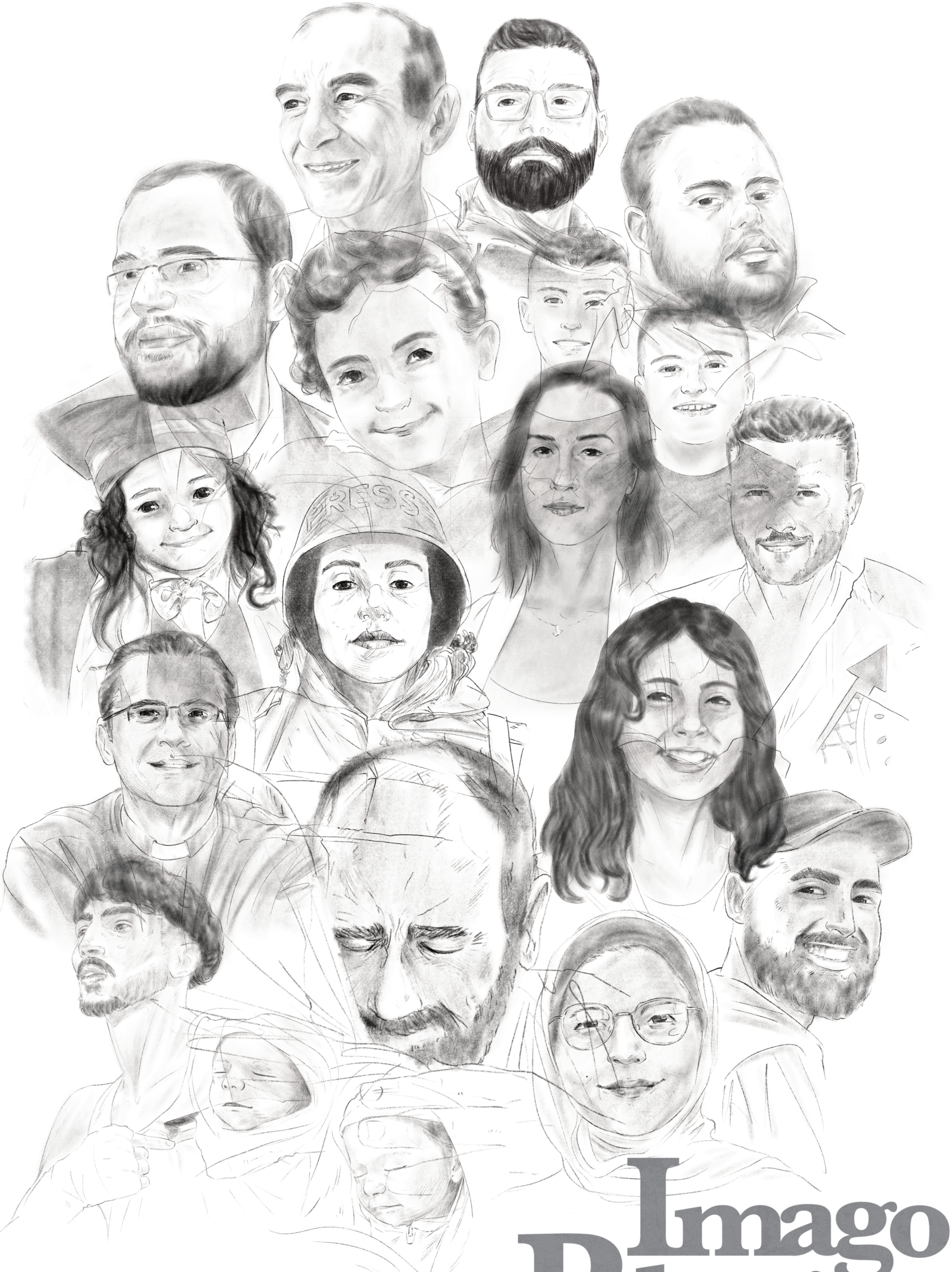
Volume 1 July-October 2024



Imago Palestina

Palestine seems so far away.
It's easy to forget that these are our neighbours.

Would you like to meet them?

Imago Palestina, Vol. 1
(July-October 2024)

blessed are you who
hunger and thirst for justice

All content, excluding small changes and revisions, originally published at imagopalestina.substack.com

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First printed December 2024

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All text written by Stephan "Sven" Goslinski, except "Raja Shehadeh," written by Mama G. All illustrations by Stephan "Sven" Goslinski, with no intent to own, infringe upon, or in any other way disrespect these beautiful faces or the neighbours they belong to.

This volume discusses the violent realities of genocide and occupation, including the killing of people of all ages, torture, and sexual assault. If you have experienced torture or sexual assault, please read the sections on Dr. Mohammad Abu Salmiya and Muhammad Al-Kurdi with additional caution.

Imago Palestina was drawn, written, and printed on lands that were taken through coercion and violence from the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Mississauga nations. This same colonialism, still alive and well here on Turtle Island, is also what has been deployed against our neighbours in Palestine for the last 76 years, most spectacularly now. As we meet our neighbours in Palestine, let us remember that the borders between "here" and "there" are immaterial to our collective responsibility to each other.

Imago Palestina is written in solidarity with the people of Palestine and with all Indigenous people who face oppression, wherever they may reside. It is written in the express goal of both Palestinian freedom and our collective freedom from forces of racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, militarism, patriarchy, and all ideologies that seek to oppress, exploit, and divide us. None of us are free until all of us are free, and safety can only come from solidarity.

We need to take care of each other.

Words of Intro duction

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a story that completely upends the way his listeners thought of "neigbours."

I'm sure you're familiar with the story--a man is travelling alone when suddenly he's attacked. Bleeding out on the side of the road, he is overlooked by three upstanding members of his community, all with their own good reasons as to why they couldn't stop and help. Then a man from a rival community sees him, helps him to safety, and pays for his care. "Who then," Jesus asks, "was this man's neighbour?"

For many of us, when we ask ourselves the same question, our first thoughts probably go to those who live near us, look like us, and share our experiences. Almost everything in our society, from the media we watch to the places we work, to the nations and cities where we live, is built around drawing circles around these groupings and encouraging us to care the most about the ones in our circle.

But as Christians, we're reminded that our neighbours can be found anywhere, not just in our geographical, ethnic, or ideological circles. Regardless of where they hail from, we understand all people to be made in the image of God--the *imago*--and that we are called to love each of these neighbours as ourselves. And especially, as Christ chose his examples intentionally, we are called to show special care for the neighbours that we find crushed, beaten down, and ignored.

Sometimes though, they feel so far away.

For over a year now now, Israel has been laying siege to the people of Gaza, Palestine, more than 2 million people forced from their homes, hundreds of thousands of wounded, and more than 44 000 Palestinians confirmed killed--a fog of war figure which public health scholars estimate is realistically closer to the hundreds of thousands. In addition, increased violence and expansion by armed settlers, backed by the Israeli military, in the West Bank has cost the lives of hundreds of Palestinians as well as homes, farmland, and livelihoods, and Israeli assaults on Lebanon have also reaped casualties in the thousands.

I know for many people I've spoken to in my Christian community, your hearts may hurt for the people of Palestine, but it really does feel so far away, in more ways than one. We wonder what we can really do to help when the tragedy seems so vast and beyond our understanding. We imagine the land of Palestine as we read of it in the Bible, but our images of the land and its people grow fuzzy beyond the first century AD.

In this project, I want to refresh that image by introducing you to your neighbours in Palestine. Every few days at ImagoPalestina.Substack.com, I showcase an individual from Palestine that I think you should know about, as well as a little information about how their experience relates to the situation we're watching on our phones and TVs, and some ways that people of faith can be praying for our Palestinian neighbours, in our hearts, words, and actions. This volume collects the first 30 of these profiles.

While each page has been lightly edited from its original publication for this new printing, in most ways they reflect the spirit of the original posts. The biggest change is this: for each original post, I included a selection of prayer requests and a list of links to more information. In this print version, you can find prayer requests and more information in the appendices at the end of the volume. Any links that would have been embedded in the digital versions will now be marked with footnotes, corresponding by number to that neighbour's section in the "More Information" appendix. All original posts are still hosted on ImagoPalestina.Substack.com, and I'd encourage you to subscribe to receive new updates as they come out.

I'll also say at the outset that there's no way to systematically introduce you to 2.4 million people, so these profiles will be biased by my own knowledge and research, but I'd encourage you to do your own, and maybe even let me know who you think could use a spotlight. Additionally, to anyone who's featured, I apologize in advance for where my skills will fall short of representing you fully, and I hope you forgive me for not really asking permission first.

So now, in response to Christ's question, "who is my neighbour?" I invite you to find a response in the following faces, names, and stories. I hope they will inspire, inform, and ignite within you a passion for justice. I hope they make Palestine feel a little bit closer.

In hope and solidarity,

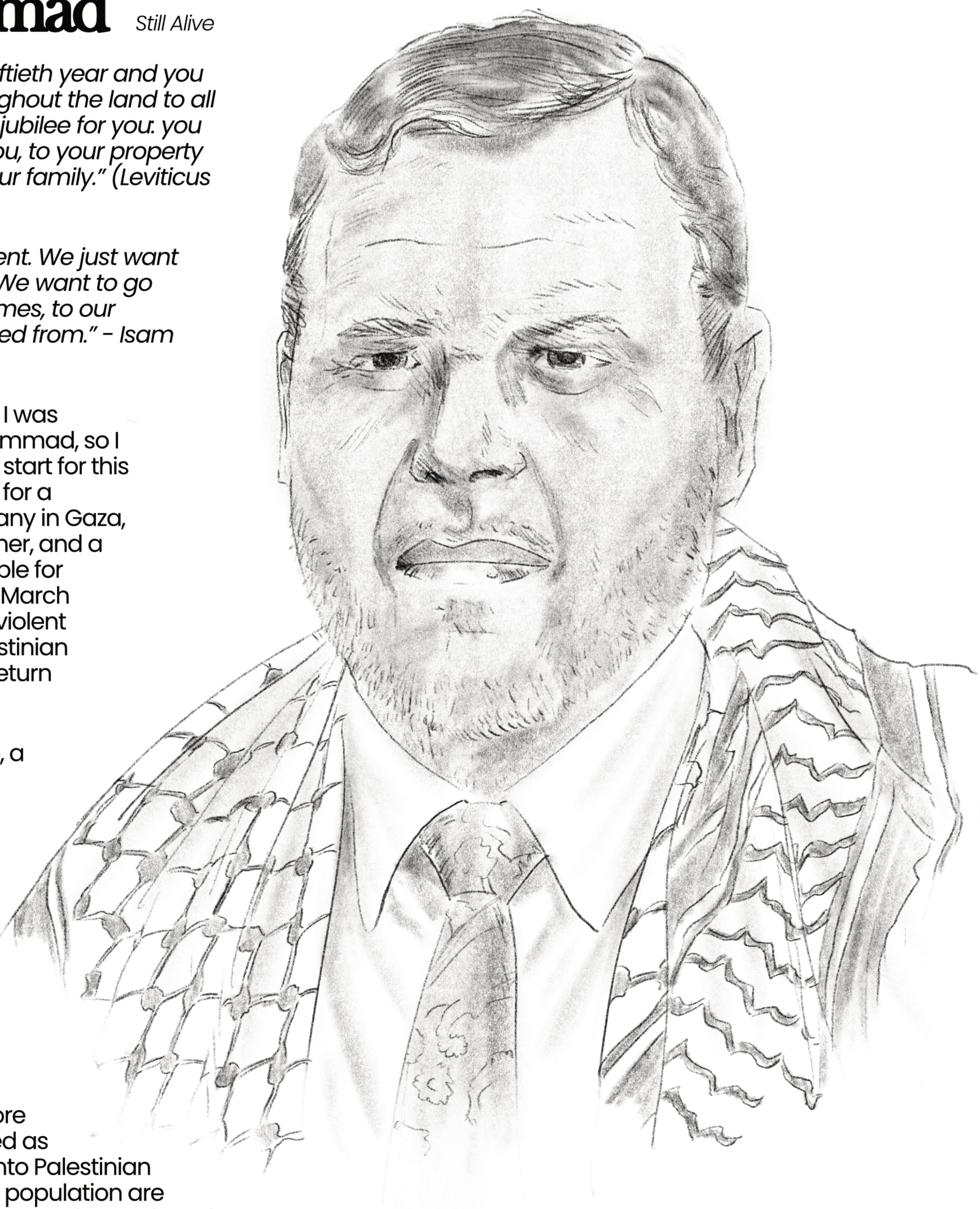
Sam

Isam Hammad

Still Alive

"And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family." (Leviticus 25:10)

"We do not want to be violent. We just want to walk down [and] cross. We want to go back to our land, to our homes, to our farms that we were uprooted from." - Isam Hamad



One of the first Palestinians I was introduced to was Isam Hammad, so I thought he'd make a good start for this project. Isam is a manager for a medical equipment company in Gaza, as well as a husband, a father, and a political organizer responsible for helping organize the Great March of Return in 2018—the non-violent protest movement for Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their homes.

For those who aren't aware, a vast many Palestinians, even those still living in Gaza or the West Bank, are considered refugees as they or their immediate ancestors were forcibly removed from their homes in 1948 by the newly forming state of Israel. This event is known as the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic), and has been followed for 76 years by more Palestinians being displaced as Israel expands its borders into Palestinian territory. In Gaza, 70% of the population are refugees, according to the UN, and even though many of the towns and villages they came from remain uninhabited under Israeli rule, they have not been allowed to return. Many Palestinian elders still have the original keys and deeds to their homes, and the Key of Return has become a popular symbol for their desire to return home.

In 2018, Isam and other organizers from Palestine and around the world conceived of the Great March of Return—six weeks of non-violent protests at the Gaza border fence—as a way to remind the world of the UN resolution that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date" (UN Resolution 194). Thousands would join the march, but rather than act in accordance with this resolution, the Israeli military responded by attacking the protesters with tear gas, rubber bullets, and live sniper fire. More than 200 Palestinians were killed, 46 of those being children, with thousands more injured, more than 8000 alone by live fire.

Isam continued to be involved in organizing in Gaza, though as of January, in the context of the current siege, he has been trying to secure passage out of Gaza for the sake of his 93 year old father and son with cerebral palsy.

You can learn more about Isam and the Great March of Return by listening to the Unsettled podcast's episodes "The Great March," "Isam Hamad: What Sort of Life is This?," "An Update from Isam Hamad."

First published July 5, 2024

Hind Rajab

Martyred on January 29, 2024

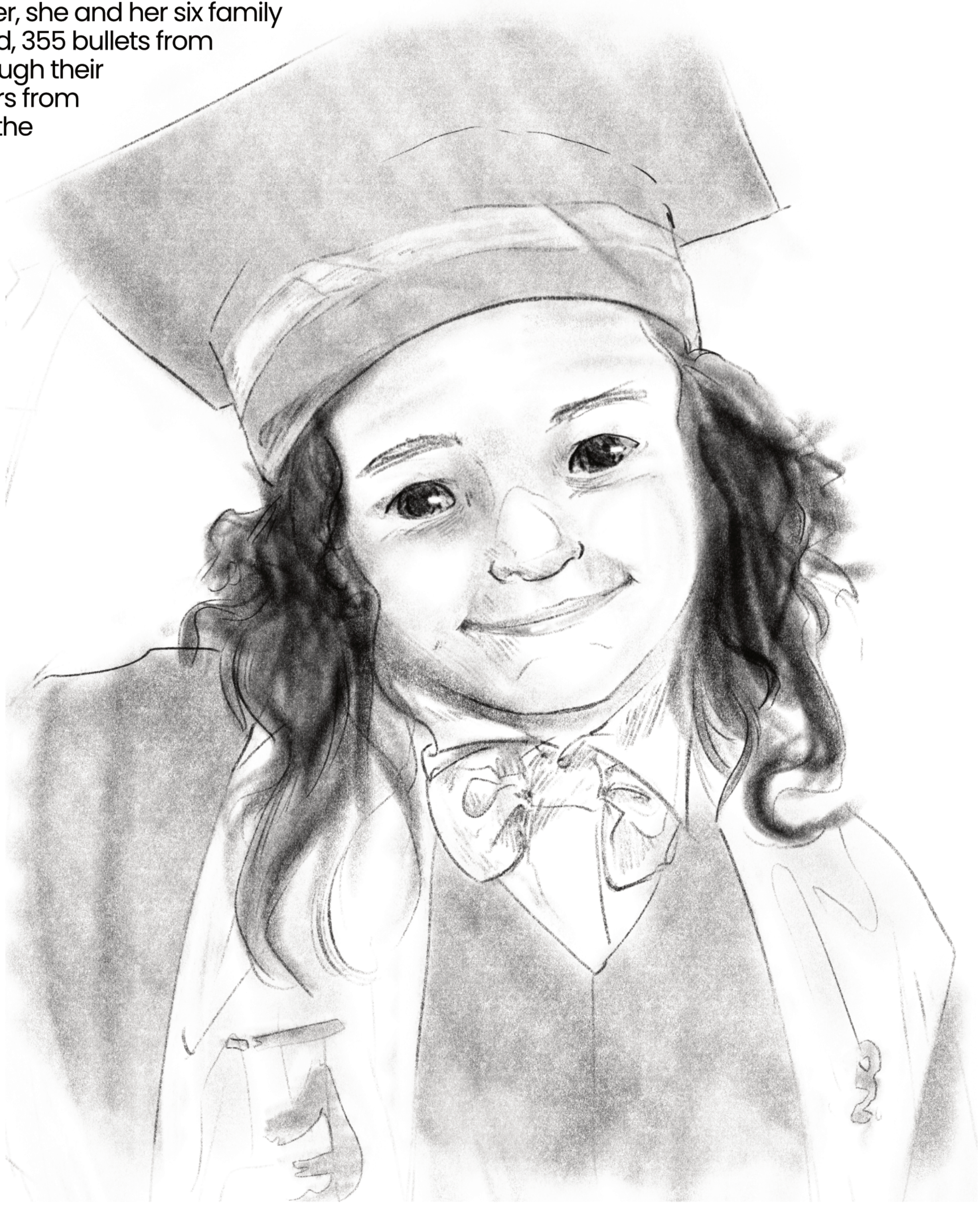
Hind Rajab is a name and a face you may have actually seen before, perhaps as her story has become one of the most widely circulated examples of the cost of Israel's siege on the lives of Gaza's children.

Hind was a 5 year old girl who, along with six other members of her family, was trying to escape the Israeli invasion of Gaza City by car. Their car was attacked by the Israeli military, and Hind came to international attention due to a recording of the emergency call she made at the time, begging to be rescued. Two weeks later, she and her six family members were found dead, 355 bullets from an Israeli tank pierced through their vehicle, and two aid workers from Palestinian Red Crescent (the local branch of the Red Cross/Red Crescent society), who had been dispatched to the call, killed nearby as well.

Hind's story has rightfully reached many, but it's important to remember that she is not the only child in this situation, and that there are many more that could still benefit from our help. In fact, just a few weeks ago, Save the Children published a report that as many as 21 000 children are missing in Gaza right now, with 17 000 of those separated from their families (or orphaned) by the Israeli military and the remaining 4000 likely trapped under the rubble of their destroyed homes, schools, and other places they hoped would be safe.

I chose to draw Hind here as she poses at her senior kindergarten graduation. She looks like so many of the students I've taught this year, and it's not fair that this was the last graduation she got to experience.

"A voice is heard in Ramah,/ mourning and great weeping,/ Rachel weeping for her children/ and refusing to be comforted,/ because they are no more." (Matthew 2:18)



First published July 7, 2024

Bisan Owda

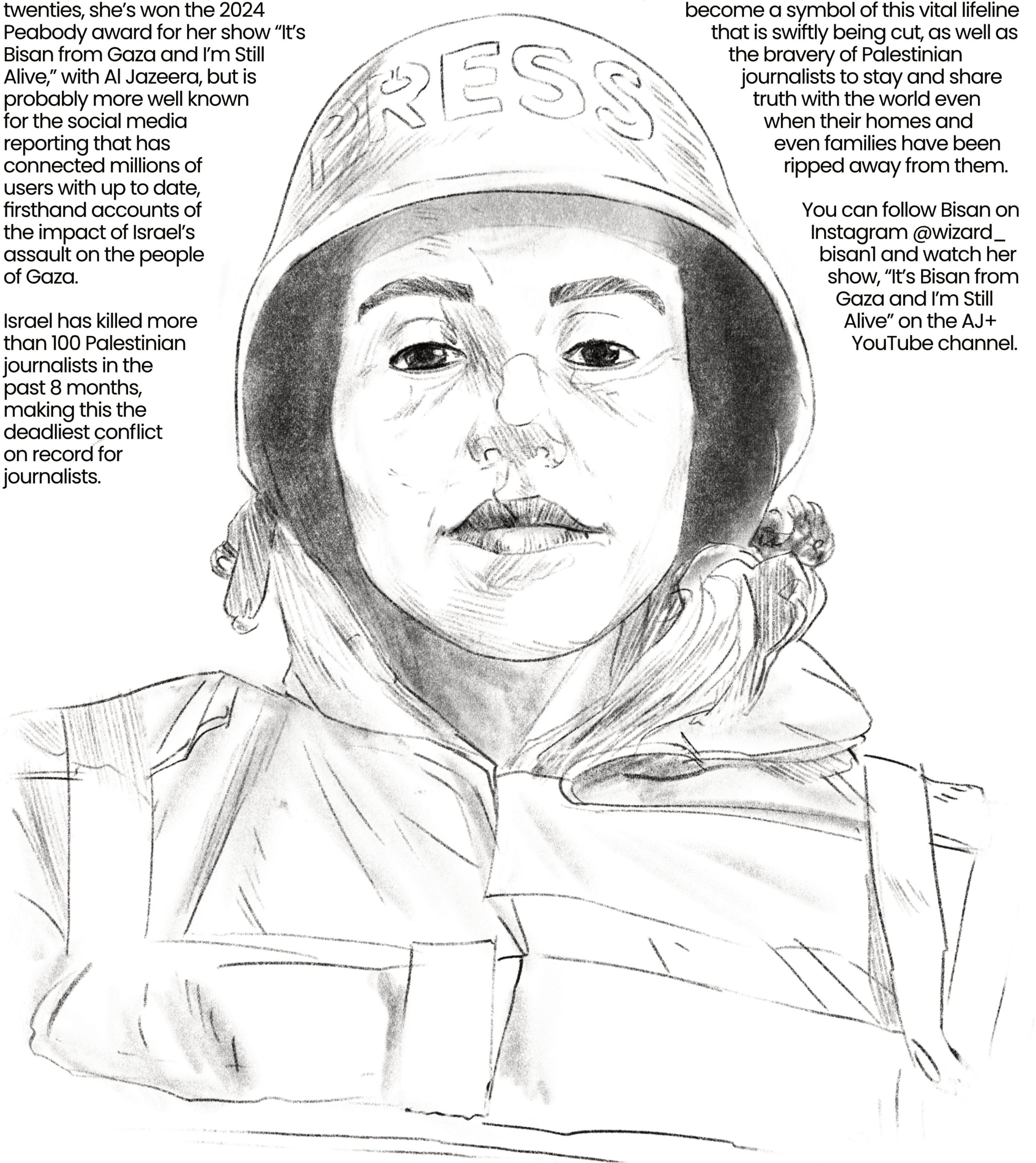
Still Alive

Here's another face you may know: this is Bisan Owda, more commonly known on social media as @wizard_bisan1, one of the most prominent faces of Gazan journalism. Only in her late twenties, she's won the 2024 Peabody award for her show "It's Bisan from Gaza and I'm Still Alive," with Al Jazeera, but is probably more well known for the social media reporting that has connected millions of users with up to date, firsthand accounts of the impact of Israel's assault on the people of Gaza.

Israel has killed more than 100 Palestinian journalists in the past 8 months, making this the deadliest conflict on record for journalists.

Moreover, there is evidence that many of these journalists were specifically targeted by Israel, during their line of duty, while wearing their press jackets. The blue press jacket has become a symbol of this vital lifeline that is swiftly being cut, as well as the bravery of Palestinian journalists to stay and share truth with the world even when their homes and even families have been ripped away from them.

You can follow Bisan on Instagram @wizard_bisan1 and watch her show, "It's Bisan from Gaza and I'm Still Alive" on the AJ+ YouTube channel.



First published July 9, 2024

Hussam Al-Attar

Status Unknown

"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4b)

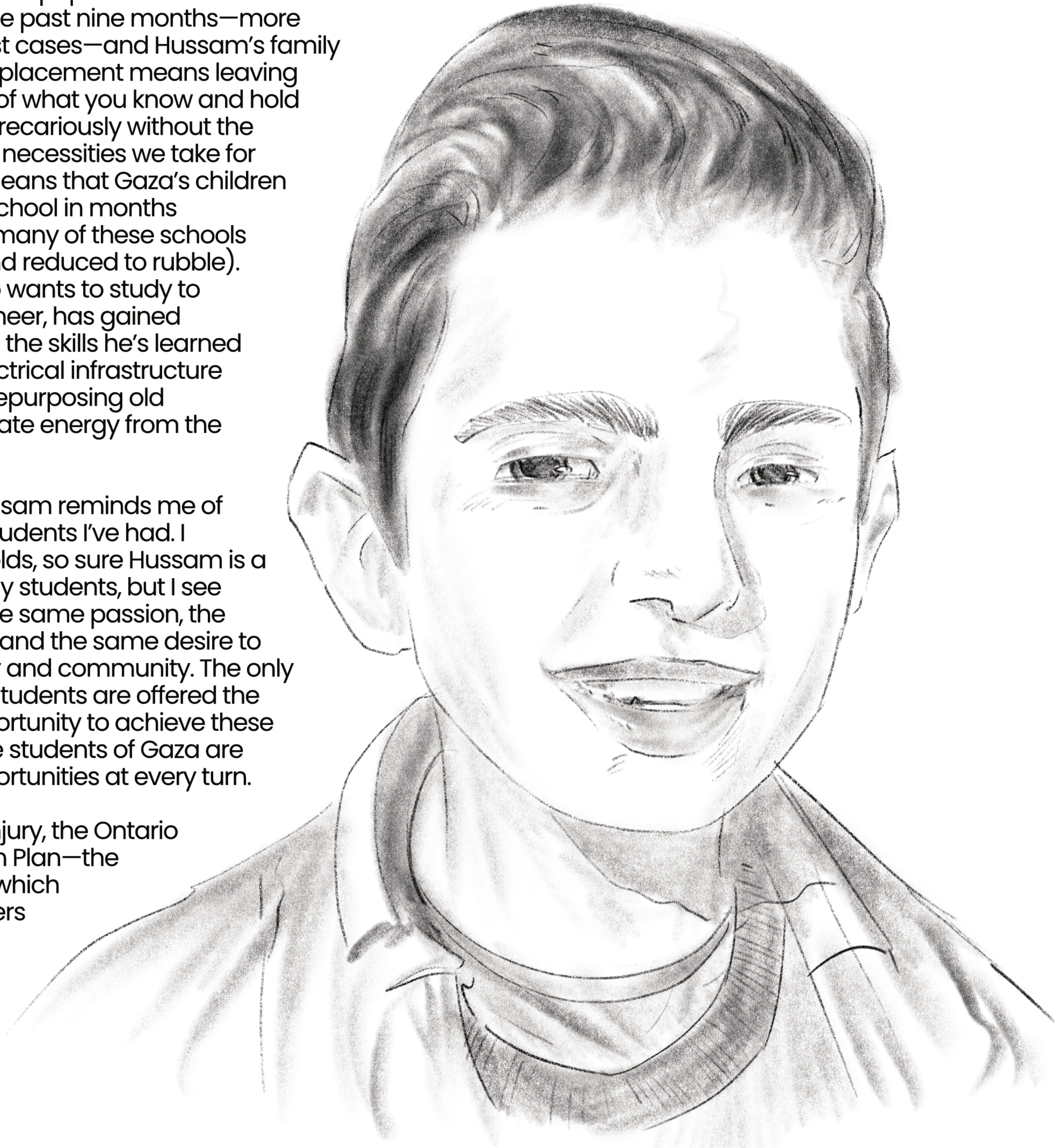
"I looked at my twin nephews and saw only fear in their eyes. They felt lonely in the dark inside the tent. So I thought … Bring joy to them, and light up this place." - Hussam, quoted in Quds Press via Middle East Monitor

This fifteen year old boy is Hussam Al-Attar, but to many he's more well known as the Newton of Gaza. Virtually all of Gaza's population has been displaced over the past nine months—more than once in most cases—and Hussam's family is no different. Displacement means leaving behind so much of what you know and hold dear, and living precariously without the comforts or even necessities we take for granted. It also means that Gaza's children haven't been in school in months (especially after many of these schools were bombed and reduced to rubble). Yet, Hussam, who wants to study to become an engineer, has gained acclaim for using the skills he's learned so far to build electrical infrastructure for his camp by repurposing old turbines to generate energy from the wind.

Just like Hind, Hussam reminds me of so many of the students I've had. I teach 4-14 year olds, so sure Hussam is a little older than my students, but I see between them the same passion, the same aspiration, and the same desire to provide for family and community. The only difference is my students are offered the support and opportunity to achieve these dreams, while the students of Gaza are denied such opportunities at every turn.

To add insult to injury, the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan—the world class plan which all Ontario teachers must pay into—has been found to be investing in companies which supply arms and military components to Israel, including Lockheed Martin and Raytheon (RTX). Our students' education cannot come at the cost of Gaza's students—and not just their education, but their very lives.

If you're an Ontario teacher and you're just as surprised and disgusted as me that your money is invested in weapons of war, you can help by going to worldbeyondwar.org/otpp. (If you're not a teacher, you can also visit that link and show your solidarity.)



First published July 11, 2024

Motaz Azaiza

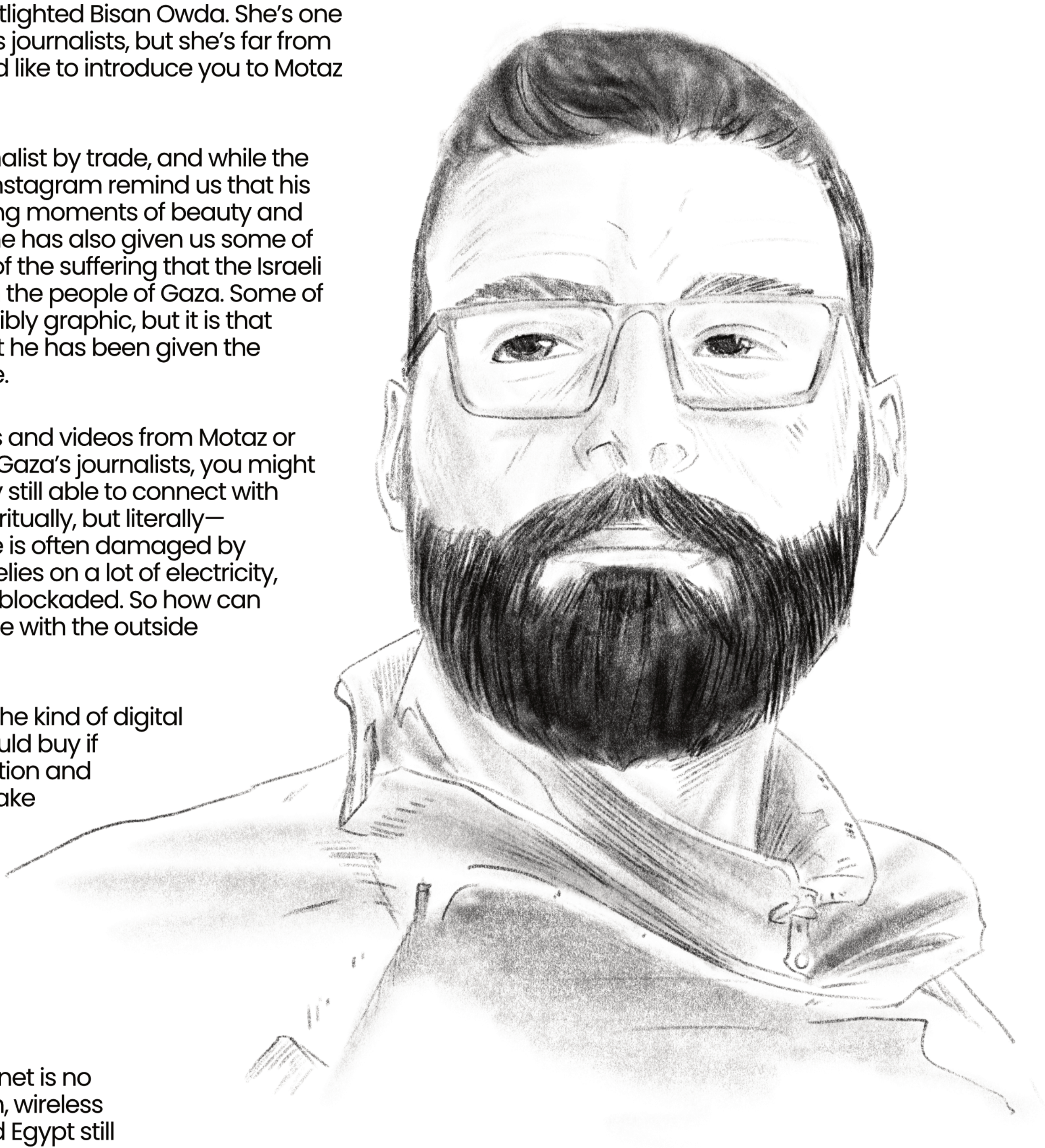
Still Alive

Earlier this week, I spotlighted Bisan Owda. She's one of Gaza's courageous journalists, but she's far from the only one. Today I'd like to introduce you to Motaz Azaiza.

Motaz is a photojournalist by trade, and while the pinned posts on his Instagram remind us that his true love is in capturing moments of beauty and human connection, he has also given us some of the clearest images of the suffering that the Israeli military is inflicting on the people of Gaza. Some of his reporting is incredibly graphic, but it is that unfortunate truth that he has been given the responsibility to share.

When we see images and videos from Motaz or Bisan or any other of Gaza's journalists, you might wonder: how are they still able to connect with us? I'm not talking spiritually, but literally—internet infrastructure is often damaged by Israeli airstrikes and relies on a lot of electricity, which Israel has also blockaded. So how can Gazans communicate with the outside world?

The answer is eSIMs, the kind of digital software that you would buy if you're going on vacation and want to be able to make calls and use data while you're abroad.



While traditional internet is no longer a viable option, wireless telecom for Israel and Egypt still reaches enough of Gaza to make it a workable, if far from ideal, solution. As you can imagine, purchasing eSIMs from within Gaza is nigh impossible, so Gazan journalists and civilians rely on people around the world to purchase and donate eSIMs to keep them connected.

If you want to help, you can learn how to donate an eSIM directly by visiting gazaesims.com or make a donation to the Crips for eSIMs for Gaza fundraiser (chuffed.org/project/crips-for-esims-for-gaza) to have someone else handle the process for you.

Motaz and his family were evacuated from Gaza in January, but he continues to work tirelessly—including sharing the reporting of those still in Gaza—for a free Palestine and a future that allows us to see Palestinian beauty again. You can follow him on Instagram @motaz_azaiza.

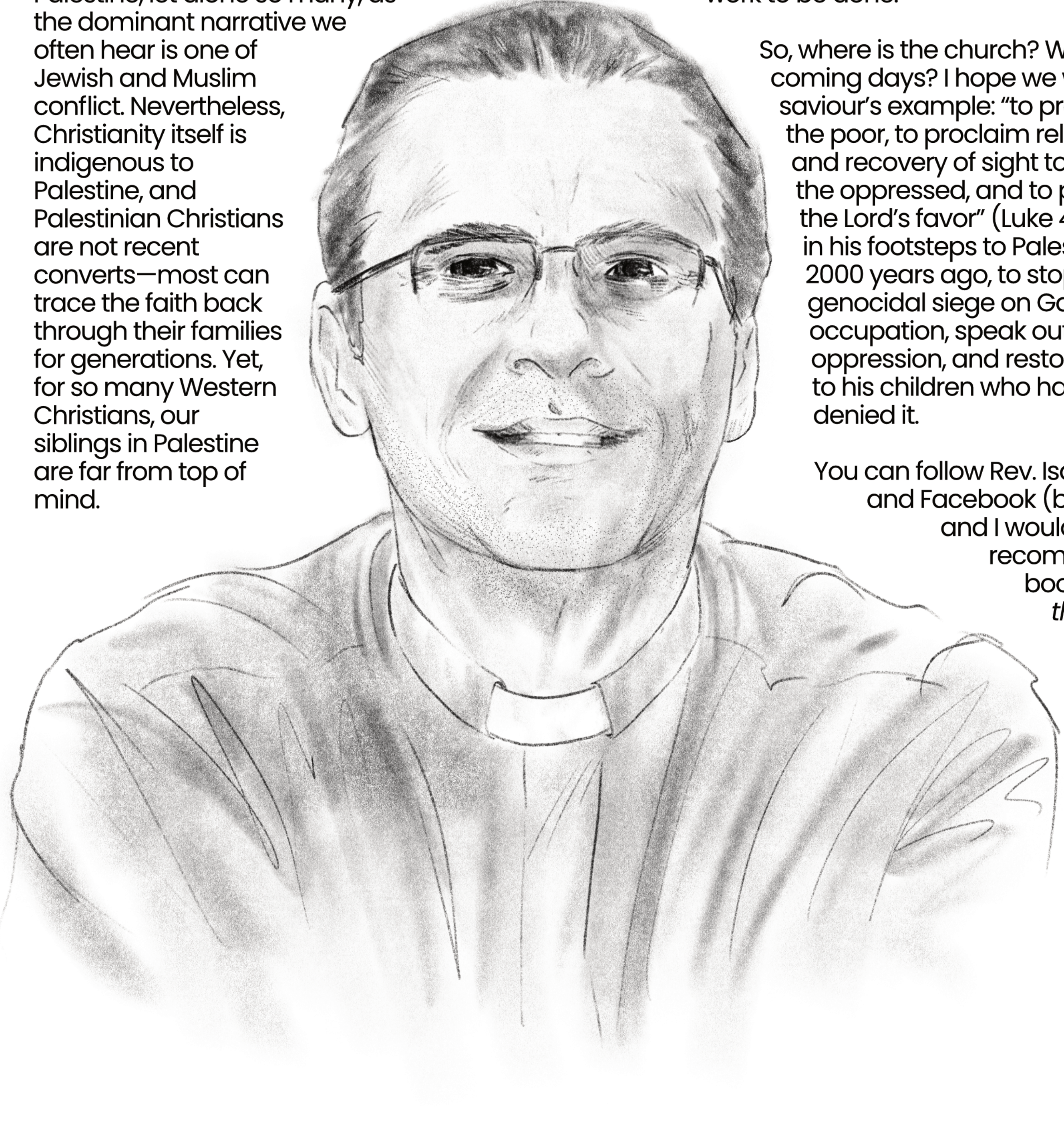
First published July 13, 2024

Rev. Munther Isaac

Still Alive

In his book, *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope*, Reverend Munther Isaac takes a common question asked in the midst of tragedy: "where is God," and reframes it for the sake of Western Christians' relationship to Palestine. God is under the rubble, as the God who became incarnate in Christ is always found with the weakened and downtrodden; the real question is: *where is the Church?*

Isaac is one of roughly 50 000 Palestinian Christians living in either the West Bank or Gaza (and there are more than 100 000 Palestinian Christians living in what we might call Israel proper, though that number is more difficult to pin down), and he himself lives in Bethlehem, pastoring the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church. Many are shocked to hear that there are Christians living in Palestine, let alone so many, as the dominant narrative we often hear is one of Jewish and Muslim conflict. Nevertheless, Christianity itself is indigenous to Palestine, and Palestinian Christians are not recent converts—most can trace the faith back through their families for generations. Yet, for so many Western Christians, our siblings in Palestine are far from top of mind.



I've been in more services than I can count where we are extolled to pray for Israel, support Israel, visit Israel to walk in Christ's footsteps, and yet I didn't know about the Christians of Palestine—or how they suffer under the same violent occupation that all other Palestinians do—until last year. It's this tension—among the many that Palestinian Christians feel every day—that Isaac consistently names in his writing and speaking as he reaches out to believers around the world.

With the current scale of tragedy, we have seen some movement in the church. Notably, the United Methodist Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Church USA recently voted to divest from Israeli bonds, a key strategy used in similar cases such as South African apartheid to exert pressure financially, rather than militarily. Yet, there is still much more work to be done.

So, where is the church? Where will it be, in the coming days? I hope we will follow our saviour's example: "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18b-19). Let us walk in his footsteps to Palestine, just as he did 2000 years ago, to stop the current genocidal siege on Gaza, end the occupation, speak out against Israeli oppression, and restore justice and dignity to his children who have so long been denied it.

You can follow Rev. Isaac on Instagram and Facebook (both @munther.isaac) and I would highly, HIGHLY recommend reading his book, *The Other Side of the Wall*. I genuinely believe it's something every Christian should read, and it's also great for church reading groups (I should know, I led one a few months ago).

First published July 15, 2024

Dr. Mohammad Abu Salmiya

Still Alive

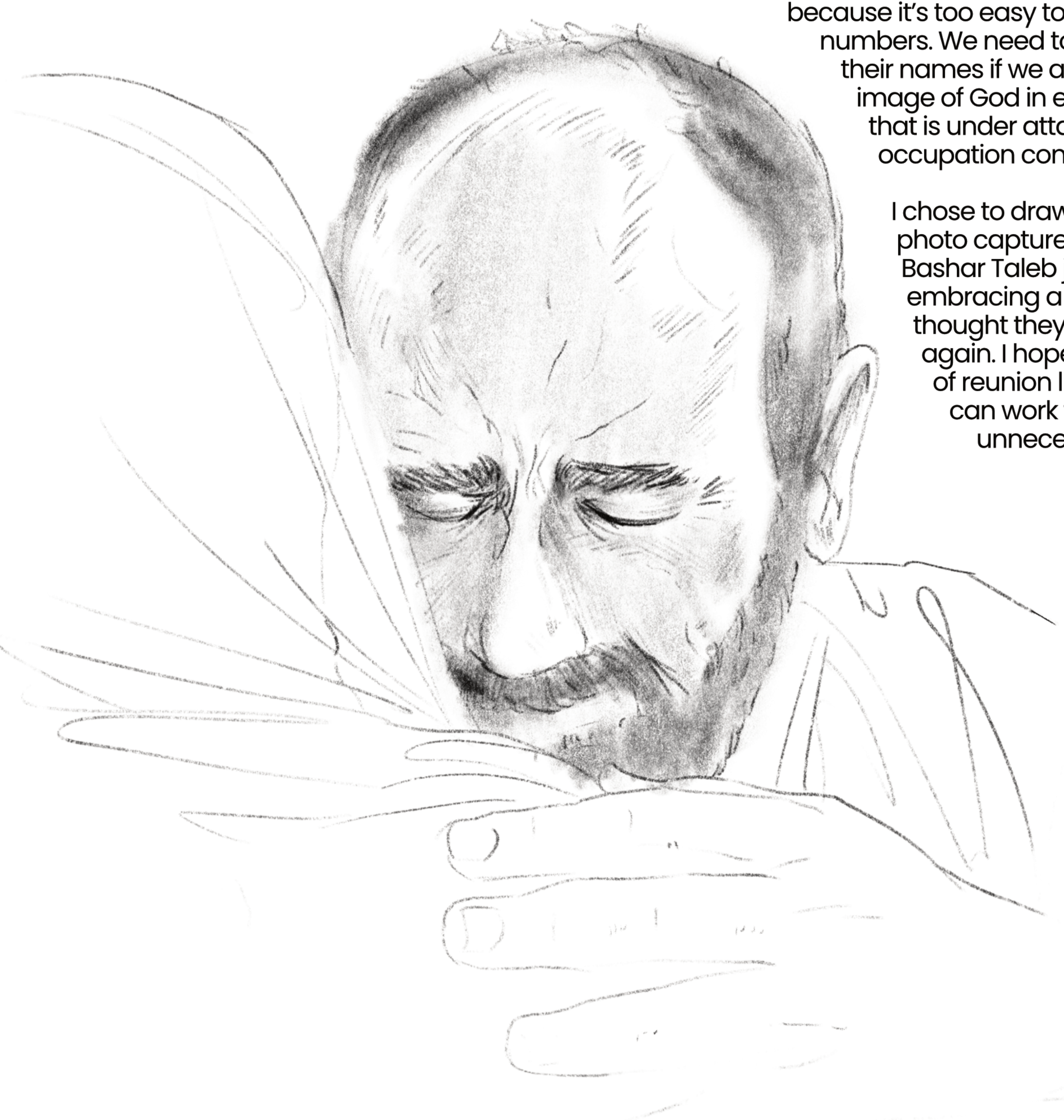
I always struggle to pick what image I should use for reference in these drawings. How do I want to represent the person I'm introducing you to? It's a snapshot by definition, so I can never encapsulate them fully, and the reality of the situation is that I only know of many of them because of fame borne from tragedy—is that the image of them I should capture?

Today's neighbour is Dr. Mohammad Abu Salmiya, and his experience is a particularly illustrative example. Mohammad is the director of the Al Shifa hospital in Gaza, but if you look for images of him in his official capacity, most of what you find is the face of a man too familiar with the horrors you see when directing a hospital in the middle of a genocide. I only learned about him, however, because he was kidnapped by the Israeli military, imprisoned for months, tortured severely, and only recently released because (allegedly) there were just too many Palestinian captives in Israeli custody.

Many don't know that Israel consistently has hundreds, if not thousands of Palestinian captives held in military prisons, the majority without charge or under charges as insignificant as "throwing stones," and many being children. This has been the status quo for years, but it has only worsened in recent months, particularly in terms of the number of healthcare workers being apprehended and the heavily corroborated experiences of torture they have experienced (see a joint report from four Israeli human rights groups in this volume's *More Information* appendix).

I have been, I think, not subtle about connecting individuals' stories to the larger systems of oppression they face or fights for liberation they may represent. This is intentional, because if Palestinians can't ignore the chains that bind them, I don't think we should be able to either. But I hope that I have given a sense of their vital humanity in the forefront, because it's too easy to think of people as just numbers. We need to know their faces and their names if we are to remember the image of God in each of our neighbours that is under attack each day the occupation continues.

I chose to draw Dr. Mohammad from a photo captured by photographer Bashar Taleb just after he was freed, embracing a relative who likely thought they would never see him again. I hope we see more moments of reunion like this, and I hope we can work to make them unnecessary in the first place.



First published July 17

Muhammad Bhar

Martyred on July 9, 2024

What does it mean to evacuate?

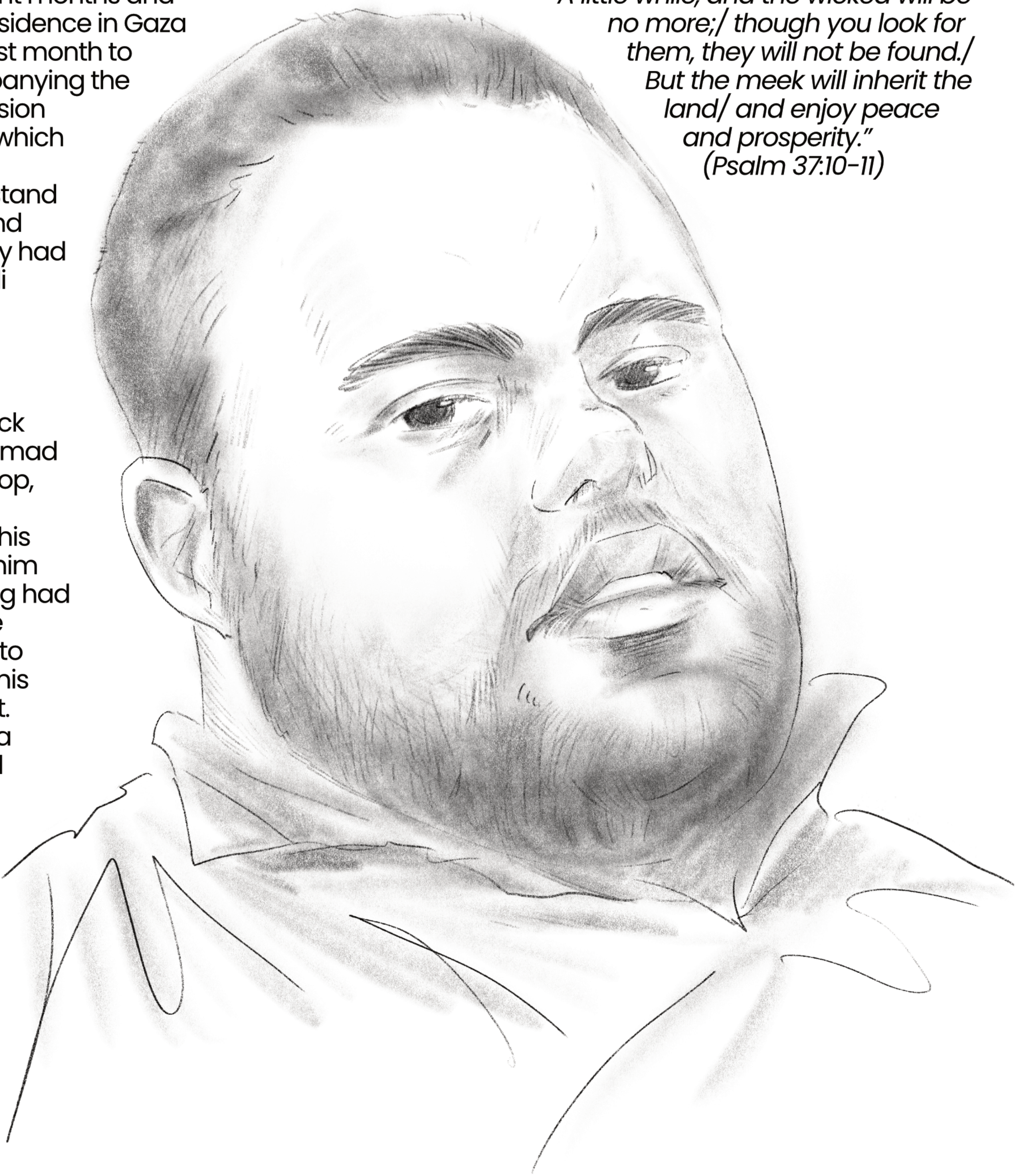
It's tempting, for those of us who live relatively stable and comfortable lives, to wonder what the big deal is about displacement in Gaza. When the population of Gaza is forced to relocate, as they have been dozens of times in the past nine months, we hear about it in the context of an ongoing 'war,' with the implication being that people are being moved for their own safety. "Evacuation" is the term we here most often, but evacuation from what?

Muhammad Bhar was a 24 year old autistic Gazan man with Down's syndrome. His family had been displaced six times in recent months and evacuated their current residence in Gaza City fifteen times in the past month to escape bombing accompanying the recent Israeli military incursion into the city, an operation which has displaced thousands. Muhammad didn't understand the fighting around him and didn't understand why they had to move. On July 3rd, Israeli soldiers broke into Muhammad's house, and when he didn't leave his beloved armchair fast enough, they set their attack dog on him. While Muhammad pleaded with the dog to stop, saying "enough my dear, enough," the dog mauled his hands and chest, leaving him bleeding out. When the dog had finished tearing at him, the soldiers took Muhammad to another room and forced his family to leave at gunpoint. When the family returned a week later after forces had pulled out of the area, Muhammad's body was found decomposing on the floor.

When you tell someone to "evacuate" or else you'll sicc an attack dog on them, that's not safety, that's murder. When you tell a population of hundreds of thousands to "evacuate" and then bomb the roads[1] and safe zones[2], that's not safety, that's terror. When you refuse to let refugees return to their homes for over 75 years, only to turn around and sell more stolen land[3], that's not safety, that's ethnic cleansing. When you put 2.4 million people in a cage, starve them, bomb them, shoot them, and deny them all dignity, that's not safety, that's genocide.

Muhammad's family buried him in the alley beside their home, the only place they were able to lay him to rest. I'm so sorry Muhammad. Nobody will be able to make you leave your home ever again.

"A little while, and the wicked will be no more;/ though you look for them, they will not be found./ But the meek will inherit the land/ and enjoy peace and prosperity."
(Psalm 37:10-11)



First published July 19

Majd Mashharawi

Still Alive

This is Majd Mashharawi, an engineer from Gaza and inventor of *SunBox* and *Green Cake*, two technologies that Majd developed to help combat Gaza's infrastructure crisis.

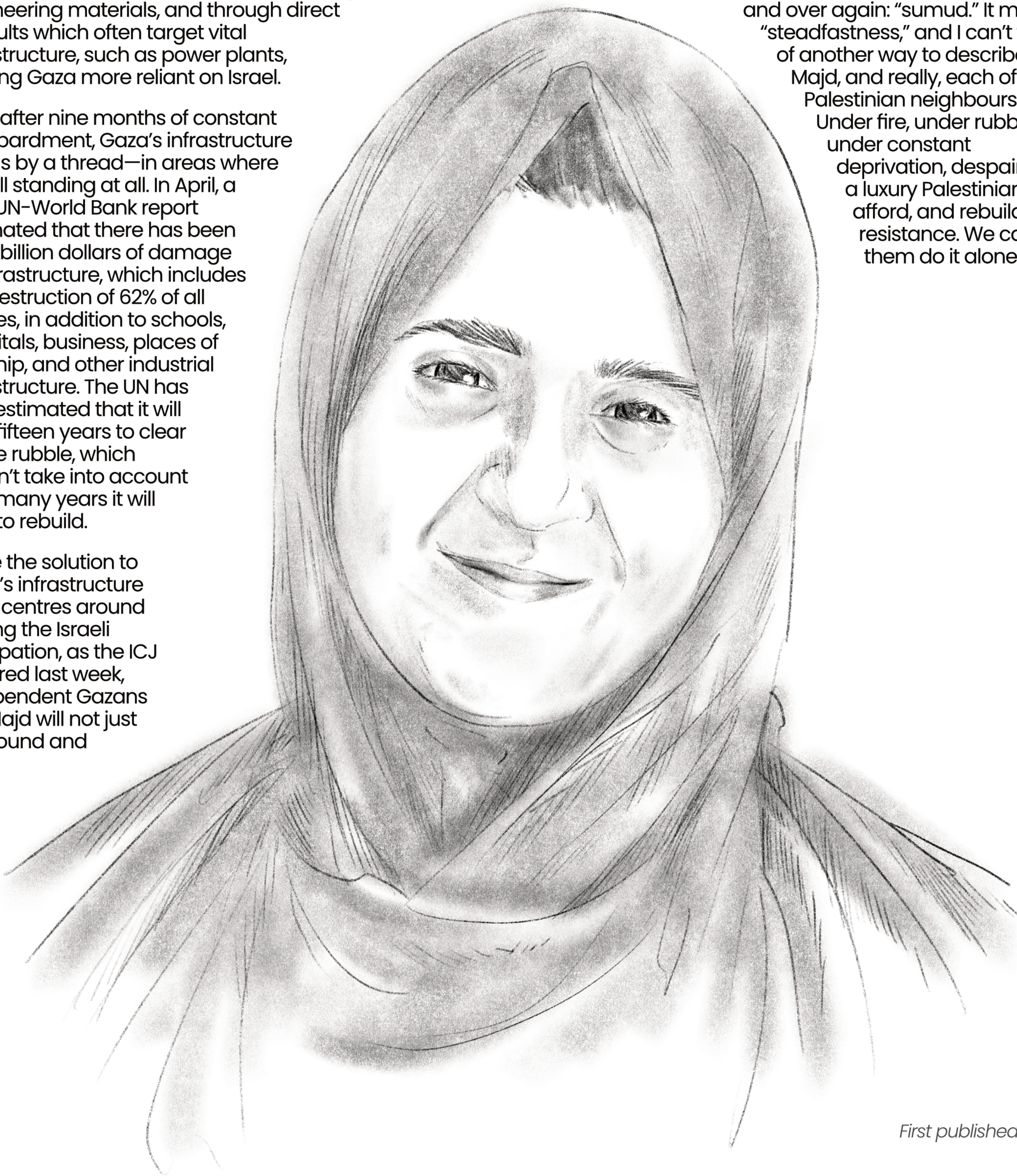
Even before its current assault on Gaza, Israel has throttled Gaza's civilian infrastructure—including water, energy, and physical infrastructure such as housing—through neglect (as an occupying force, Israel is required to invest in infrastructure for its occupied territories as it would elsewhere in the country), through the blockade which strictly limits a vast variety of building and engineering materials, and through direct assaults which often target vital infrastructure, such as power plants, making Gaza more reliant on Israel.

Now, after nine months of constant bombardment, Gaza's infrastructure hangs by a thread—in areas where it's still standing at all. In April, a joint UN-World Bank report estimated that there has been $18.5 billion dollars of damage to infrastructure, which includes the destruction of 62% of all homes, in addition to schools, hospitals, business, places of worship, and other industrial infrastructure. The UN has also estimated that it will take fifteen years to clear all the rubble, which doesn't take into account how many years it will take to rebuild.

While the solution to Gaza's infrastructure crisis centres around ending the Israeli occupation, as the ICJ required last week, independent Gazans like Majd will not just sit around and wait.

While Majd originally wanted to go into physics, she found a space for herself and a desperate need to meet in engineering. Faced with rubble all around her from Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza, she invented *Green Cake*, a concrete replacement that can be used to make strong, stable building blocks out of rubble and ash. Faced with a chronic energy shortage but abundant sunlight, she invented *SunBox*, an affordable solar system that can provide reliable power for a whole household.

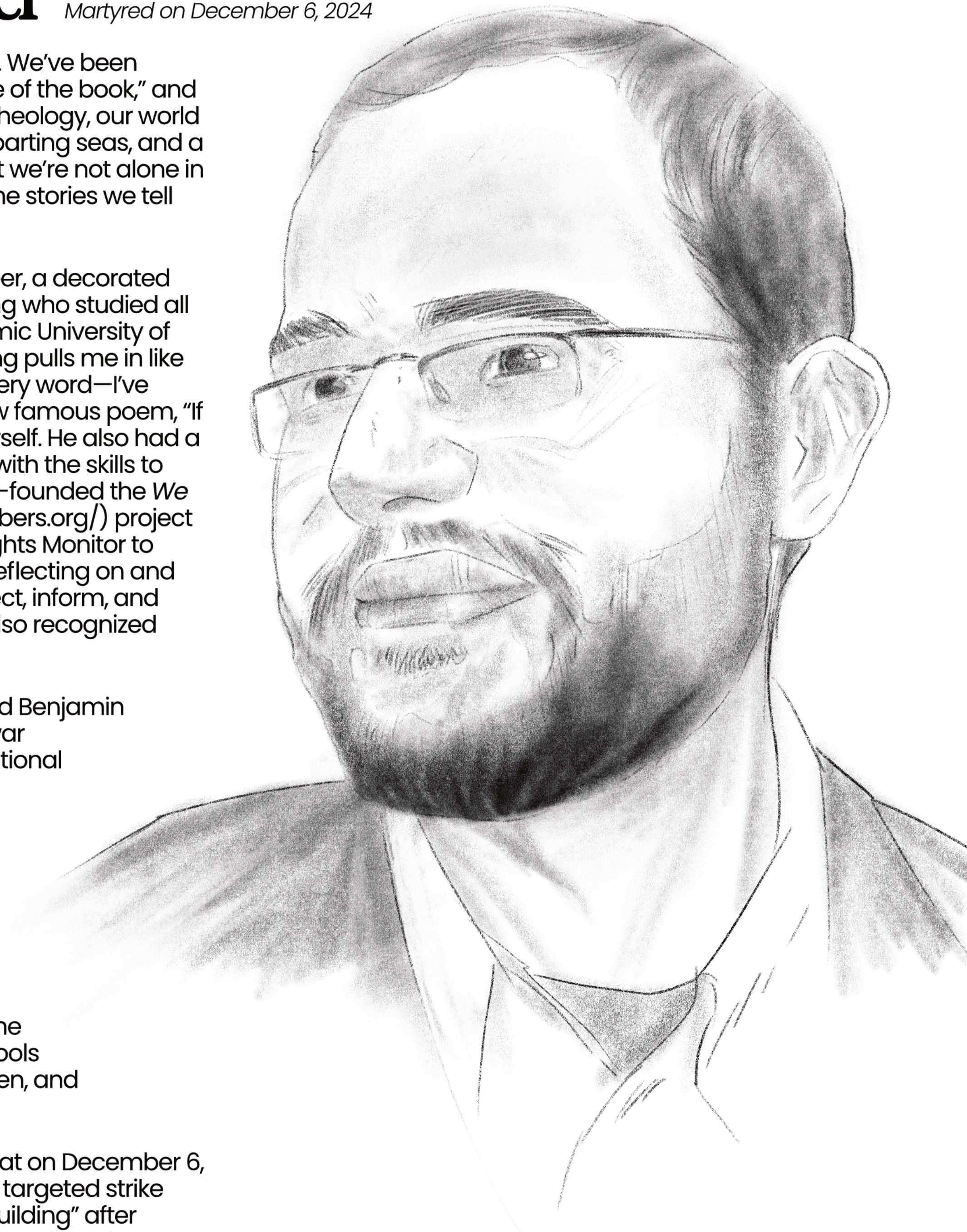
If you learn about Palestine for long enough, you'll hear one word come up over and over again: "sumud." It means "steadfastness," and I can't think of another way to describe Majd, and really, each of our Palestinian neighbours. Under fire, under rubble, under constant deprivation, despair is not a luxury Palestinians can afford, and rebuilding is resistance. We can't let them do it alone.



First published July 24

Dr. Refaat Alareer

Martyred on December 6, 2024



We Christians know the power of a story. We've been known throughout history as the "people of the book," and before we ever think analytically about theology, our world is shaped by stories of burning bushes, parting seas, and a man who proved death isn't the end. But we're not alone in this—everyone's lives hang in a web of the stories we tell each other and ourselves.

One such storyteller was Dr. Refaat Alareer, a decorated professor of literature and creative writing who studied all around the world and taught at the Islamic University of Gaza. A poet and essayist, Refaat's writing pulls me in like I'm sitting beside him, hanging on his every word—I've linked a couple of his essays and his now famous poem, "If I May Die," below so you can see for yourself. He also had a passion for equipping Palestine's youth with the skills to share their stories as well, and in 2015 co-founded the *We Are Not Numbers*(https://wearenotnumbers.org/) project with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor to help them do just that. He spent his life reflecting on and employing the power of stories to connect, inform, and impact the decisions we make. But he also recognized their shortcomings.

Two days ago, America's leaders allowed Benjamin Netanyahu, the president of Israel and war criminal wanted for arrest by the International Criminal Court[1], to speak in the highest decision making room in America (and thereby, realistically, the world) : the US congress. He was given the highest platform he could be given, and was allowed to tell *his* story. So he told a story full of lies[2], fearmongering, and calls for continued American support of Israel's genocide. "Give us the tools and we will finish the job faster," is what he said, as back home in Gaza those very tools continued to fall on innocent men, women, and children.

Israel used one of these 'tools' to kill Refaat on December 6, 2023, in what Euro-Med Monitor called a targeted strike that "surgically bombed out the entire building" after receiving "weeks of death threats...online and by phone from Israeli accounts"[3]. He died with his brother, sister, and four of his nephews. Four months later, on April 26, 2024, his eldest daughter and his newborn granddaughter were also killed using these 'tools.'

Why should a war criminal get to tell his story to the most influential audience in the world, to thunderous applause no less, while Palestinians need to fight and *literally die* to share theirs? Why are so many so willing to believe a narrative of "a right to defend itself," and "the only purely defensive military" and "acceptable casualties" but not the cries of mothers and fathers who have lost their children? Refaat once wrote:

"How many dead Palestinians are enough? As I write this I am exposed, naked and vulnerable. Reliving the horrors Israel brought on us is one thing, but disclosing your life and your most intimate moments of fear and terror, where you spill your heart out is another...the promise was that it will effect change and that policies, especially in the United States, will be improved. But, honestly, will they? Does a single Palestinian life matter? Does it?"

Stories must be in service of people, and we have been too complacent for too long with uncompassionate stories that hide the faces of our neighbours behind posturing and sales projections. We need to choose better stories, and we need to stop letting war criminals speak in congress.

If we believe a single Palestinian life *does* matter, it is our responsibility to act like it.

First published July 26, 2024

Majed Abu Maraheel

Martyred on June 12, 2024

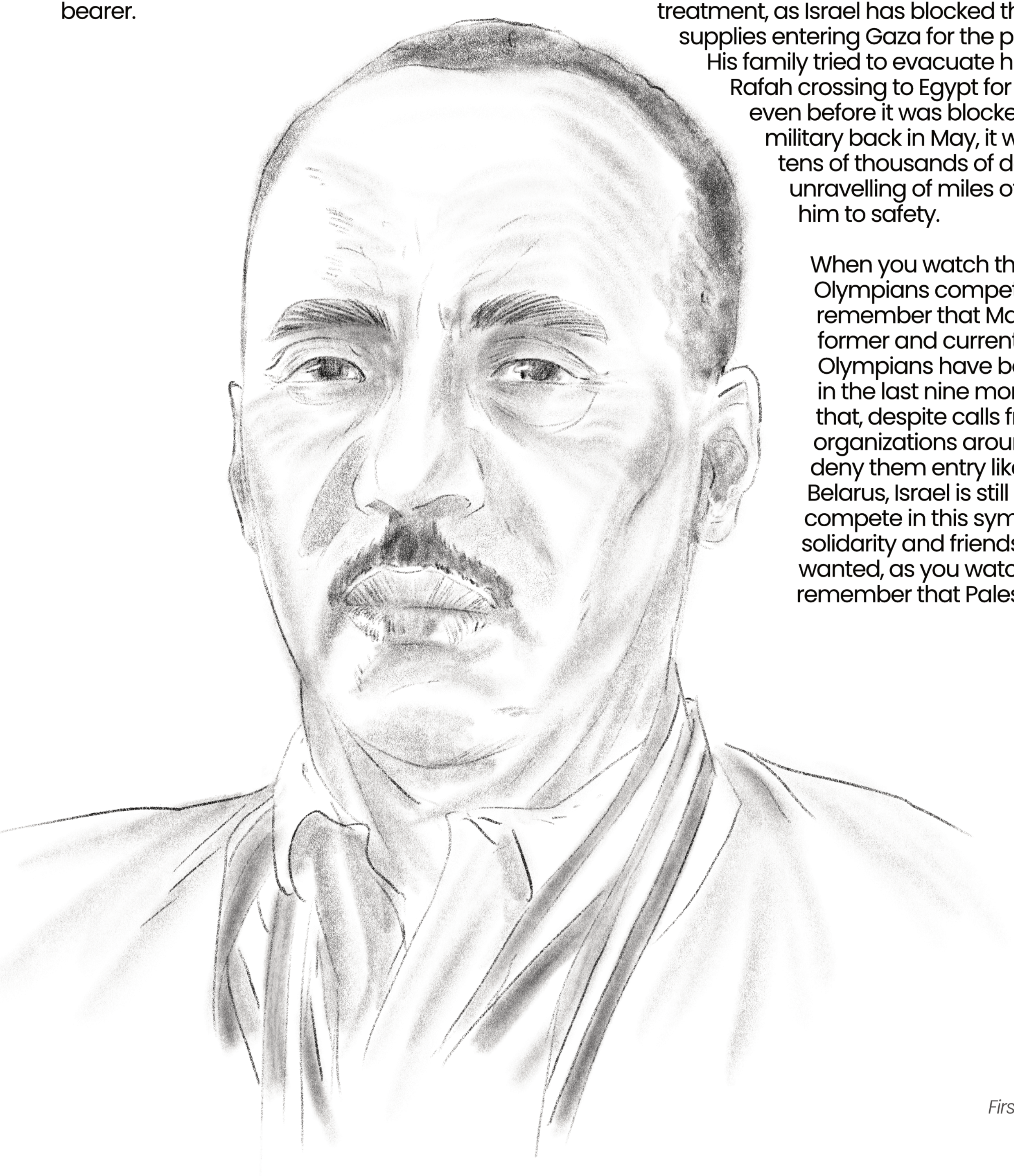
Well, the Olympics are upon us, so I thought it would be a good idea to talk about some Palestinian Olympians. You'll meet three this week (ten if you watch the Palestinian Olympians currently competing this year), and the first one I'd like to introduce to you is Majed Abu Maraheel.

Majed, from the Nusierat Refugee Camp Gaza, was a long distance runner, as well as a soccer player, and competed for Palestine in the 10 000 and 5000 meter races at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, making he and his running partner Ihab Salama the first Palestinian Olympians, with Majed being the first Palestinian flag bearer.

Neither Majed or Ihab won a medal at the games, but that wasn't their only goal. I expect for most of us, the Olympics represents international solidarity and the recognition of friendship between nations through sport. At a time where the Israeli occupation of Palestine had been underway for decades already, Majed's goal at the Olympics was to "remind the world that Palestine exists."

Majed died on June 12 this year when his kidneys failed. In any other context, we might see this as an unfortunate end to an unsuccessful campaign of treatment, but Majed didn't have access to such treatment, as Israel has blocked the flow of medical supplies entering Gaza for the past nine months. His family tried to evacuate him through the Rafah crossing to Egypt for treatment, but even before it was blocked by the Israeli military back in May, it would have taken tens of thousands of dollars and the unravelling of miles of red tape to get him to safety.

When you watch the eight Palestinian Olympians compete this week, remember that Majed and 68 other former and current Palestinian Olympians have been killed by Israel in the last nine months. Remember that, despite calls from people and organizations around the globe to deny them entry like Russia and Belarus, Israel is still allowed to compete in this symbol of international solidarity and friendship. And as Majed wanted, as you watch the Olympics, remember that Palestine exists.



First published July 29, 2024

Nagham Abu Samra

Martyred in December 2023

The second Palestinian Olympian I'd like to introduce you to this week is Nagham Abu Samra, an aspiring young athlete who was preparing to compete for Palestine in karate at this year's Olympics.

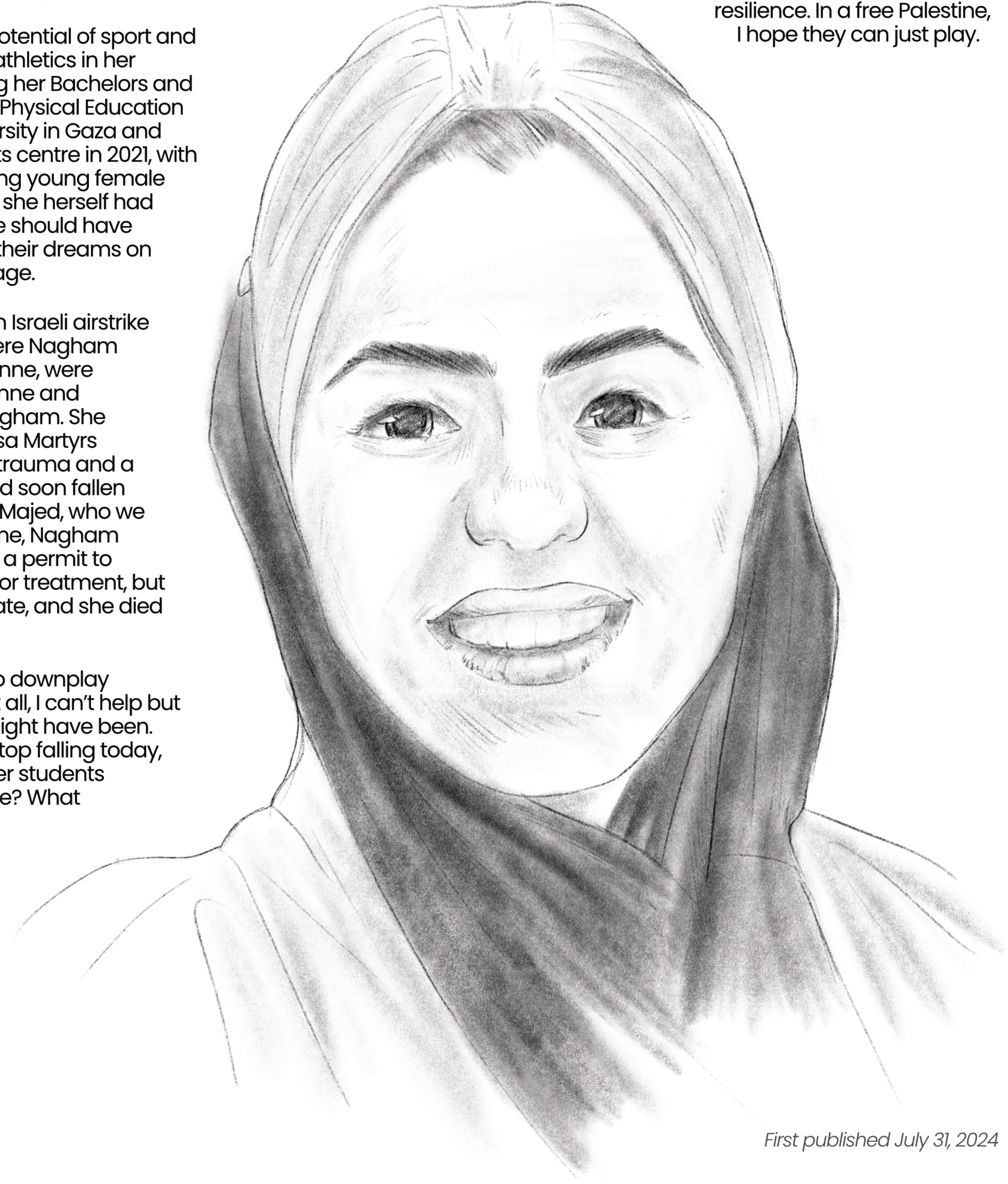
If you've worked in sports and athletics for any amount of time, particularly with children and youth, I'm sure you know how much sports can bring a community together. Done well, sports can give people of all ages opportunities to learn how to compete, train, win, and lose with dignity and mutual respect for all participants—skills which are vital for a properly functioning society. For many, they're a place to experience and overcome adversity through hard work and a reliance on your teammates.

Nagham saw the potential of sport and became a pillar of athletics in her community, earning her Bachelors and Masters degrees in Physical Education from Al-Aqsa university in Gaza and establishing a sports centre in 2021, with a speciality in training young female karate hopefuls like she herself had been. This week, she should have been representing their dreams on the international stage.

But in December, an Israeli airstrike hit Khan Younis where Nagham and her sister, Rosanne, were staying, killing Rosanne and severely injuring Nagham. She was taken to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital with head trauma and a missing leg, and had soon fallen into a coma. Unlike Majed, who we heard about last time, Nagham was able to receive a permit to evacuate to Egypt for treatment, but it was too little too late, and she died in January.

While I don't want to downplay Nagham's death at all, I can't help but think about what might have been. Even if the bombs stop falling today, what happens to her students now that she is gone? What happens to the community she trained to serve? And I think about her injury even before her death. What if she had the aid she needed and had survived? She would likely have never competed again, or if she had, her story would now be one of overcoming her injury. What of all the athletes and artists and chefs and workers and mothers and fathers and children—the 91 000 injured Gazans—who have had their lives completely changed, but who we know only as numbers?

Football Association President Jibril Rajoub recently said that "sport can be a good tool to expose the suffering of the Palestinian people and to highlight their determination and commitment to achieving their goals." He is right, and Palestine's athletes, whether Olympians in Paris or kids on the street, show us that. But I pray for a future where military might and occupation no longer have the power force their story into a mould of resilience. In a free Palestine, I hope they can just play.



First published July 31, 2024

Waseem Abu Sal

Still Alive

"You ain't seen nothin' yet." - Waseem Abu Sal via Instagram

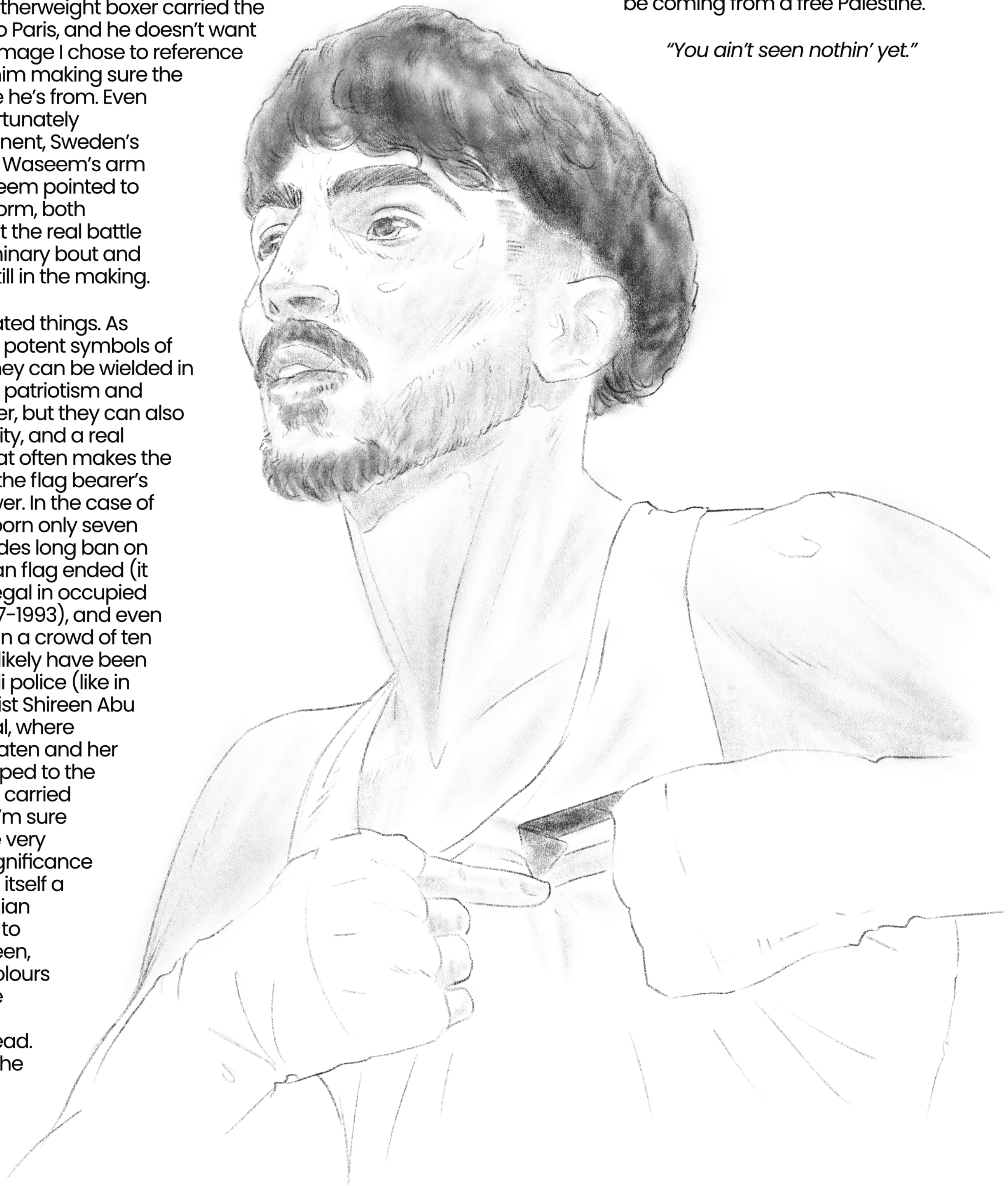
For the third and final Palestinian Olympian I'll be showcasing this week, I wanted to highlight someone currently participating on the world stage in Paris. Who better to choose than Palestine's flagbearer: Waseem Abu Sal.

Along with his teammate, swimmer Valarie Tarazi, this 20 year old featherweight boxer carried the Palestinian flag into Paris, and he doesn't want us to forget it. The image I chose to reference is one of many of him making sure the world knows where he's from. Even when he was unfortunately defeated, his opponent, Sweden's Nebil Ibrahim, held Waseem's arm up high while Waseem pointed to the flag on his uniform, both understanding that the real battle isn't just one preliminary bout and the real victory is still in the making.

Flags are complicated things. As probably our most potent symbols of national identity, they can be wielded in the service of blind patriotism and overreaching power, but they can also show resilience, unity, and a real tangible hope. What often makes the most difference is the flag bearer's relationship to power. In the case of Waseem, he was born only seven years after a decades long ban on flying the Palestinian flag ended (it was completely illegal in occupied territories from 1967-1993), and even so, had he flown it in a crowd of ten or more, he would likely have been repressed by Israeli police (like in the case of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh's 2022 funeral, where mourners were beaten and her casket nearly dropped to the floor because they carried Palestinian flags). I'm sure Waseem would be very familiar with the significance of the watermelon, itself a symbol for Palestinian resistance held up to show off its red, green, black, and white colours when you could be criminalized for holding a flag instead. Yet despite all this, he can now carry his flag in front of the world.

As Majed Abu Maraheel said, when the Olympians of Palestine compete, they come to "remind the world that Palestine exists." And not just that it exists, but that it exists despite, as swimmer Yazan al-Bawwab reminds us: "France does not recognise Palestine as a country"[1]. And that it *still* exists, despite the Israeli flagbearer Peter Paltchik happily signing bombs destined to fall on Gaza[2]. And that it *will* exist. That it *will* exist—despite genocide and willful ignorance—and Waseem will return to the Olympics in 2028, and maybe he will be coming from a free Palestine.

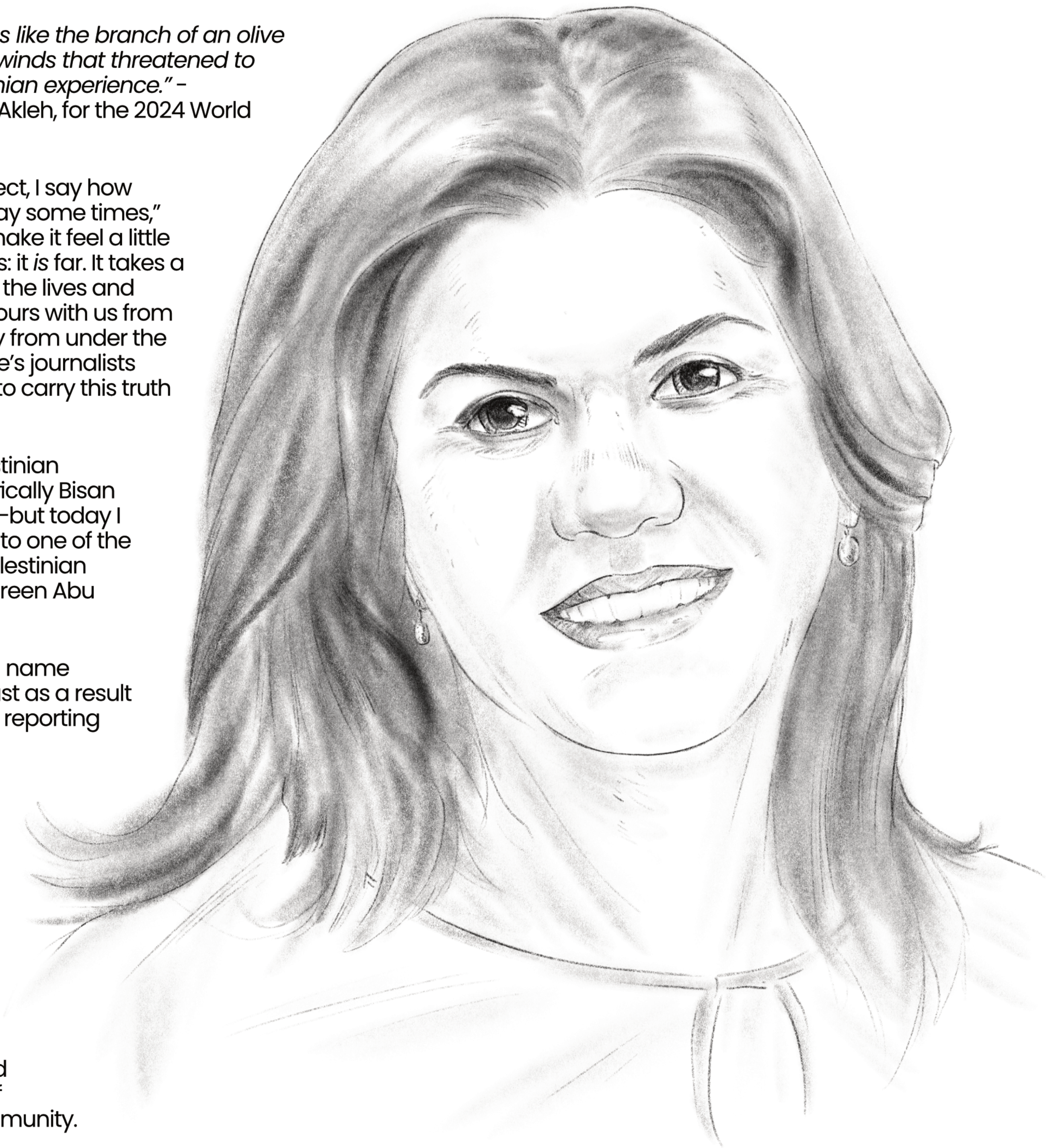
"You ain't seen nothin' yet."



Shireen Abu Akleh

Martyred on May 11, 2022

"For me, Aunt Shireen was like the branch of an olive tree, resisting the strong winds that threatened to erase the truth of Palestinian experience." - Shireen's niece, Lina Abu Akleh, for the 2024 World Day of Prayer



In the tagline for this project, I say how "Palestine feels so far away some times," and while my goal is to make it feel a little less far away, the reality is: it *is* far. It takes a concerted effort to share the lives and struggles our our neighbours with us from across the sea, especially from under the occupation, and Palestine's journalists regularly risk their safety to carry this truth to us.

We've talked about Palestinian journalists before—specifically Bisan Owda and Motaz Azaiza—but today I wanted to introduce you to one of the most famous faces of Palestinian reporting in the world: Shireen Abu Akleh.

Shireen was a household name throughout the Middle East as a result of her 25 years of diligent reporting with Al Jazeera, from the West Bank which she called home, but also internationally. More than just a reporter, she also worked previously with both UNRWA and the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, she was also a role model for many young women throughout Palestine, and was a valued member of Palestine's Christian community.

However, on May 11, 2022, while wearing a press vest and covering an Israeli military incursion into the Jenin refugee camp, Shireen was fatally shot by the Israeli military. Her murder sent shockwaves throughout the country and the journalistic community, especially after investigations by sources such as CNN determined that there had been no Palestinian fighters near her, which suggests that her killing was targeted. Furthermore, at her funeral—one of the most well attended in Palestine in recent memory—Israeli police attacked her pallbearers, almost bringing her casket crashing to the ground.

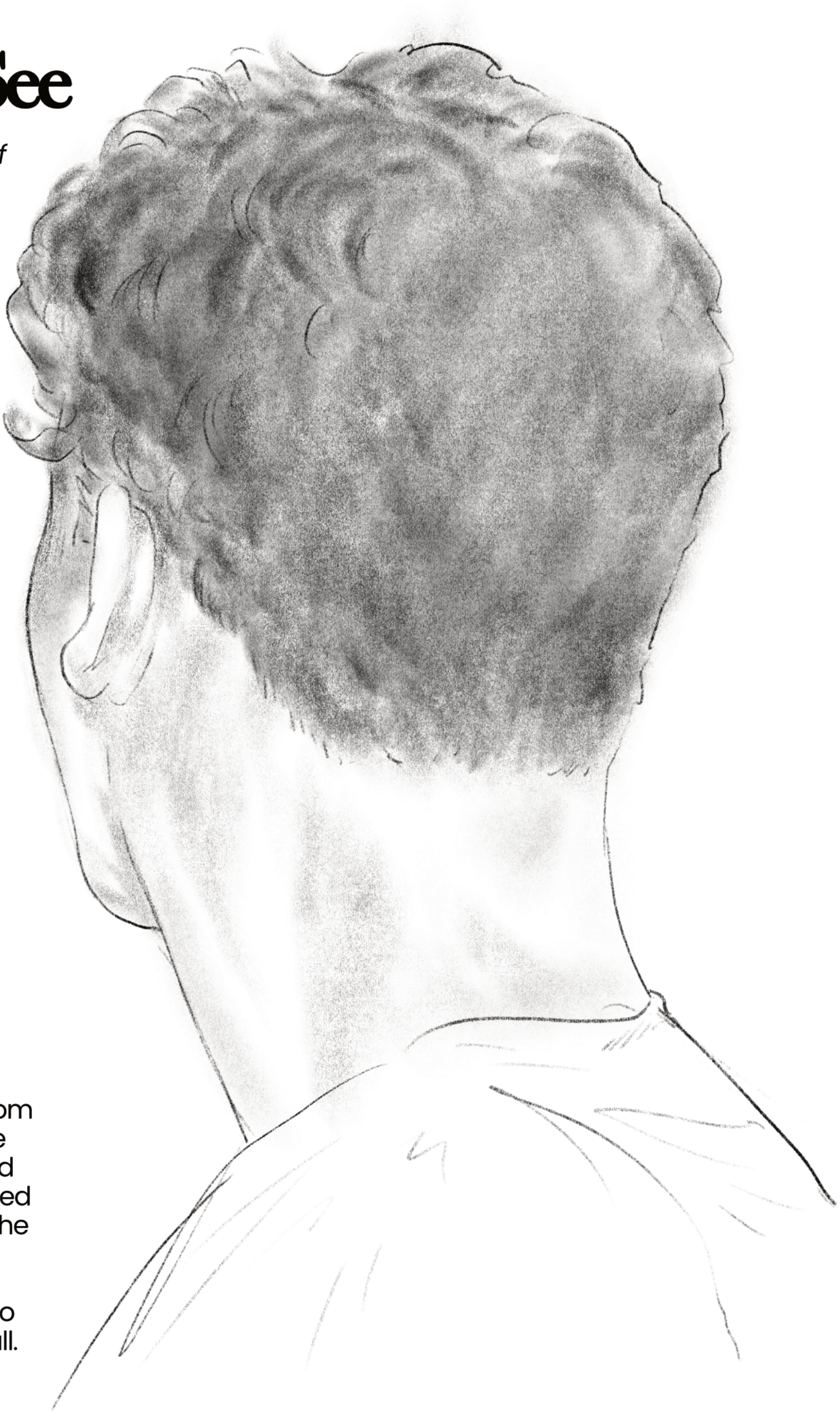
Unfortunately, the Israeli military's tactic of targeting journalists continues unabated. Just last week, Ismail Al Ghoul and Ramy Al Refee were also killed by an air strike on their clearly identified press vehicle, raising the tally of journalists confirmed killed by Israel in the last ten months to at least 113 (in addition to the 32 injured, 52 arrested, and 2 missing).

In the same statement for the 2024 World Day of Prayer that I quoted at the start of this post, Shireen's niece, Lina, said, that her aunt's way of "speaking the truth is a form of loving resistance, because it calls the oppressor back to their humanity," and we're seeing what happens when the oppressor cannot stand to hear that call. It's up to us to repeat it loud and clear, if not for Shireen, then for the rest of our neighbours who still need their truth to be shared.

First published August 8, 2024

The Ones We Don’t See

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:29-31)



While the goal of this project has always been to share the faces, names, and stories of our neighbours in Palestine—so we can see the image (imago) of God in each of them—there will always be a flaw backed into that goal. What about the faces we don’t get to see?

Usually, when I pick a neighbour to showcase, it’s because I’ve seen their face or read their words in connection to some new development in Palestine. I don’t think this is a big revelation; I think it’s always been obvious that the *other* goal of this project has been to keep people informed about the ongoing genocide, and how we can help.

But then on Saturday, as hundreds of congregants rose for their morning prayer in the Al-Tabin school emergency shelter, Israel bombed the school, killing over one hundred people. In mere moments, American-made bombs turned one hundred living, breathing, praying image bearers of God into ash and meat, so completely that first responders could hardly identify anyone.

Before this, on Monday August 8, Israel released a container truck into Gaza. Inside, they had returned 89 bodies, possibly of detainees who had been killed in custody, or possibly bodies which had been dug up from cemeteries during an Israeli ground offensive. All of the bodies were in advanced states of decomposition, and though community members rushed to see if their loved ones had been returned, it was impossible to identify the bodies.

See, normally when I think about the faces I won’t get to share in this project, it’s just because of the scale of it all. I can’t draw the 2.4 million people of Gaza, let alone the millions more throughout the rest of Palestine and the diaspora. But this past week, and really the last 300+ days (and really the last 76 years), show us that we won’t get to see some of our neighbours faces because their oppressors have ripped them away from us. There are faces we may never see—faces tortured behind the bars of administrative detention, faces starving in a tent after a dozen “evacuations,” faces crushed under the rubble, faces without the electricity or signal to communicate, faces the algorithms of our social media don’t deem marketable enough, faces that our news media don’t deem marketable enough, faces that our politicians might have nice words for but no actions-- faces, faces, faces.

Friends, we need to work for these faces too. Just because we can’t see them doesn’t mean they aren’t there, doesn’t mean they aren’t our neighbours, doesn’t mean we are powerless.

The *day* before the Al-Tabin massacre, the American Government issued another $3.5 billion dollars in military aid to Israel[1]. That’s billion with a B. And as I wrote last week, Canada recently allocated $43 million (still not chump change) for purchases of Israeli missiles[2]; on top of that, despite the March NDP motion calling for no new military exports to Israel, there are still $95 million dollars worth of existing permits for military exports that have not been cancelled[3].

The power to oppress is coming from us—from our countries, our economies, and unfortunately, our tax dollars. We can make a difference, and it’s our responsibility to do so—to make our leaders understand that enough is enough.

First published August 12, 2024

Muhammad Al-Kurdi

Still Alive

"I was imprisoned for 32 days...It felt like 32 years."

A family friend of mine is a paramedic, and from her stories it seems like one of the most chaotic jobs you can have. Every shift provides a bouquet of unexpected situations where life and death is sometimes literally on the line—all while whipping around the neighbourhood at top speeds. Imagine, then, what driving an ambulance in a war zone must be like.

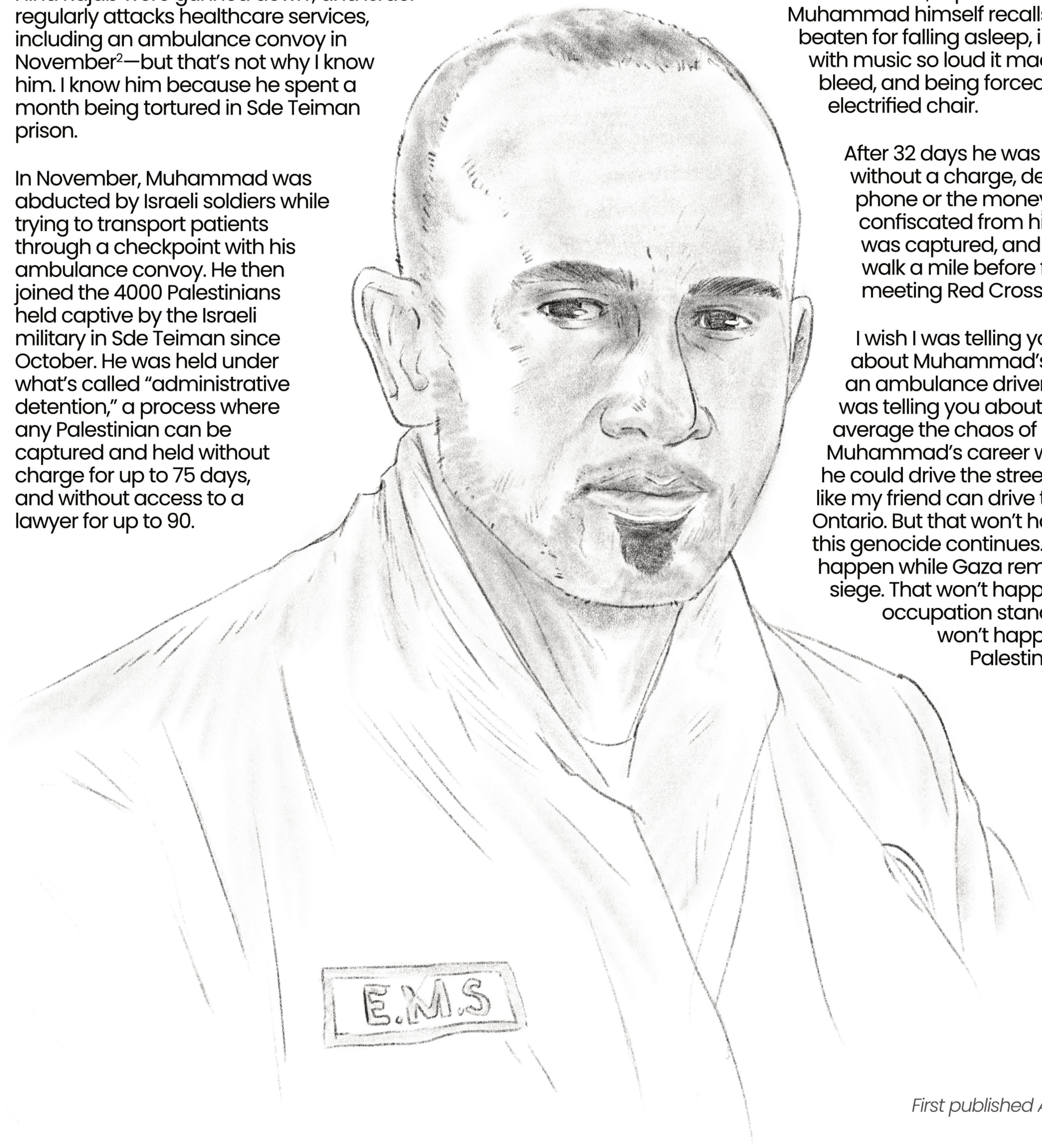
Muhammad al-Kurdi is an ambulance driver in Gaza, and I'd like to be writing to you about his heroism—about how he braved streets where the paramedics sent to rescue Hind Rajab were gunned down[1], and Israel regularly attacks healthcare services, including an ambulance convoy in November[2]—but that's not why I know him. I know him because he spent a month being tortured in Sde Teiman prison.

In November, Muhammad was abducted by Israeli soldiers while trying to transport patients through a checkpoint with his ambulance convoy. He then joined the 4000 Palestinians held captive by the Israeli military in Sde Teiman since October. He was held under what's called "administrative detention," a process where any Palestinian can be captured and held without charge for up to 75 days, and without access to a lawyer for up to 90. Many are released without ever having been charged with a crime, all the while having been subjected to intense cruelty.

Reports from the UN, The New York Times, Amnesty International, Israeli human rights group B'tselem, and Israeli whistleblowers allege, honestly, just about the darkest stuff you can imagine, backed up with corroborated testimonies and, in some cases, video proof. In the prison, Muhammad and his fellow captives are kept naked except for underwear (or diapers) and a blindfold, routinely beaten, interrogated for hours, kept in rooms with ear-splitting music playing, shocked with electricity, and in some cases, raped with a metal rod. Muhammad himself recalls being beaten for falling asleep, interrogated with music so loud it made his ears bleed, and being forced to sit on an electrified chair.

After 32 days he was released without a charge, denied his phone or the money that was confiscated from him when he was captured, and made to walk a mile before finally meeting Red Cross workers.

I wish I was telling you right now about Muhammad's heroism as an ambulance driver. Hell, I wish I was telling you about how average the chaos of Muhammad's career was—I wish he could drive the streets of Gaza like my friend can drive the streets of Ontario. But that won't happen while this genocide continues. That won't happen while Gaza remains under siege. That won't happen while the occupation stands. That won't happen until Palestine is free.



First published August 15, 2024

Hamada Shaqoura

Still Alive

"The aid packages are a lifeline for us. Without them, many would starve. By documenting how we turn these packages into meals, I aim to show the strength of our community and the critical importance of continued support. It's about turning a small act of kindness into a beacon of hope for many."

If you spend any time on TikTok (or Reels, maybe?) you might have seen Hamada Shaqoura's face before. Better known as Hamada Shoo (@hamadashoo), he's a food blogger by trade, and before October his time was spent travelling throughout Gaza to showcase the diversity of flavours served up in restaurants of all kinds. Since the assault began however, he's gained thousands of followers for his almost magical ability to turn the meagre provisions available in Gaza right now into warm, filling, homey meals. His real trick, though, is making smiles appear on the faces of children living amidst rubble.

Speaking of smiles, I hope Hamada will forgive me for choosing a moment when he wasn't wearing his trademark frown. While his clientele usually leave with a smile on their faces, he always maintains a dour demeanour. He told the CBC "I suspect that this is the look of most of the people, the feeling of most of the people...We've told the world in all languages, all that's left is to speak to them with our eyes." He knows that, no matter what supplies he's able to scrounge up, no matter how many meals he makes, he can't feed everyone. A hot meal or a nostalgic desert is great, but most of what Gazans will eat every day will come out of a can, or from a bloodied bag of flour[1], or not at all.

A smile won't stop a genocide.

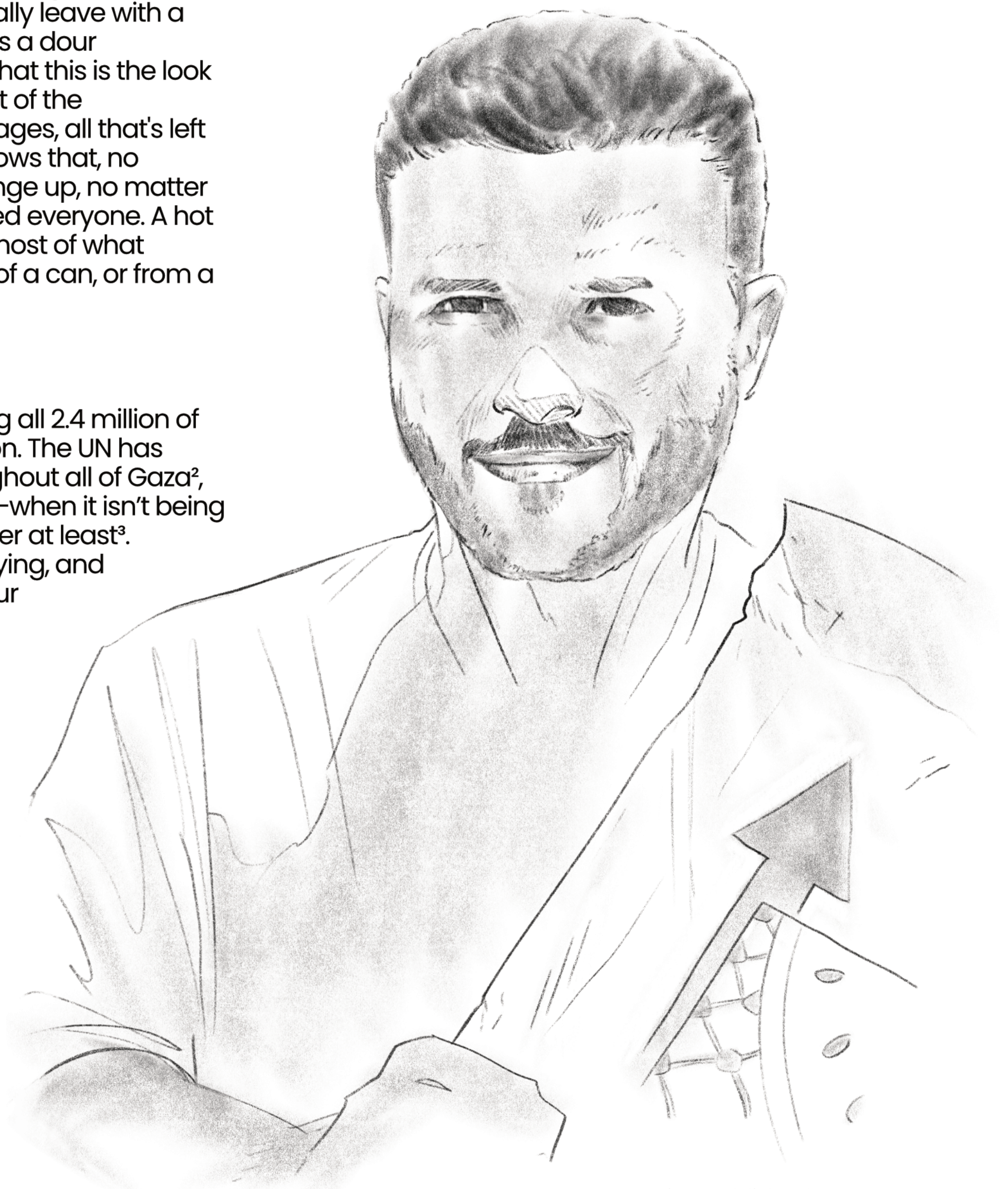
By tightening its blockade, Israel is driving all 2.4 million of our neighbours in Gaza toward starvation. The UN has declared that famine has spread throughout all of Gaza[2], and humanitarian aid is barely a trickle—when it isn't being destroyed by Zionist civilians at the border at least[3]. Our neighbours are suffering, they are dying, and they will keep dying if we cannot force our leaders to end the blockade.

But Hamada still cooks. He still films and shares his magic with the world. He still speaks with his eyes. And, when he gets the opportunity to deliver some emergency wood ovens to people who've lost everything—as he's doing here—he still smiles.

If we think we can save the people of Gaza by adding a few droplets to the trickle of aid that gets in, we're fooling ourselves—the whole dam needs to come down! Our first priority should always be addressing the root of the problem however we can, and the root of starvation in Gaza is Israel's blockade. But that doesn't mean we can't *also* add some droplets.

While I know you're going to pray with your voice today by addressing the root of the problem and telling your elected official about Hamada and the starvation of Gaza, there are a few places that could really use your 'few droplets.' The first is Hamada himself. Like many, Hamada is seeking a way out of Gaza for himself and his family, which as of May includes his newborn son, Nizar. The second is Watermelon Relief, the organization which Hamada often partners with to get the food he cooks with and distribute the meals (and whose logo you see on the box he's carrying). The third is World Central Kitchen, an international NGO which is one of the best ways to get food into Gaza right now (they also supplied the wood ovens he was delivering, and you may remember them from when Israel targeted a drone strike on one of their aid convoys, killing 7)[4]. All need whatever you have to give, alongside your voice.

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24)

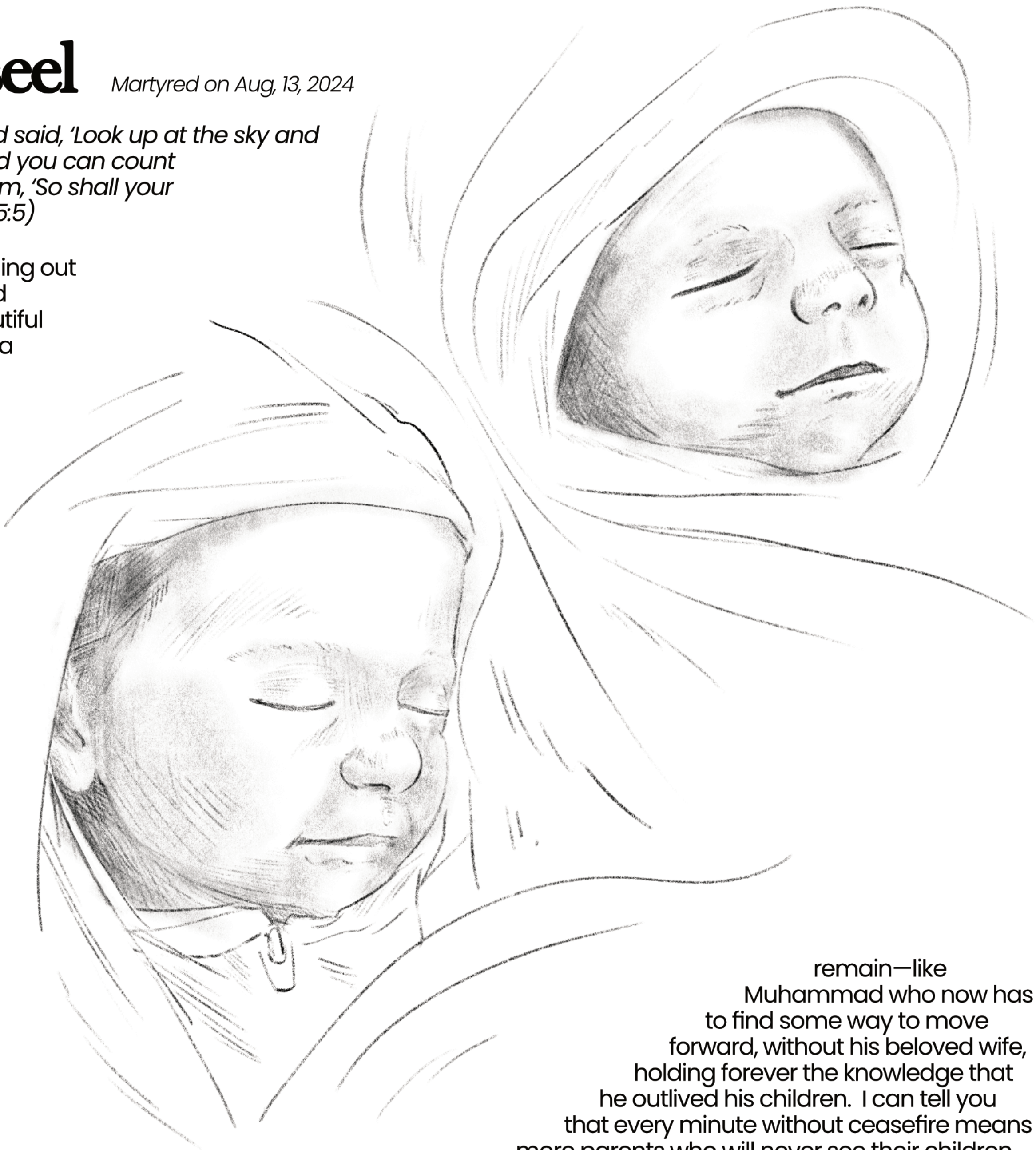


First published August 15, 2024

Aser & Aseel

Martyred on Aug, 13, 2024

"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" (Genesis 15:5)



I've spent the week hanging out with one of my very good friends and her two beautiful daughters—a baby and a toddler. I'm at the age where my friends are starting to have kids, but these two are easily the closest (at least emotionally) to me, and whenever they're around, I am just captivated. Starstruck. The way they move, the way they smile, the way the older one is just starting to get her words, the way the younger scrunches her nose to communicate—I can't look away. I imagine this is maybe about a hundredth of what their parents feel like when they look at them. It also makes this post so hard to write.

Aser and Aseel were newborn twins, born to Muhammad and Jumana Abu al-Qumsan. Their birth on August 10th was practically a miracle, as Jumana suffered complications in pregnancy and childbirth, and Gaza's healthcare system has been ravaged by Israeli assaults[1]. On August 13th, Muhammad went with excitement to pick up his children's birth certificates from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza, leaving Jumana and her mother at their apartment to take care of Aser and Aseel. While he was gone, an Israeli airstrike destroyed the apartment, killing all inside. He still had the birth certificates in his hand when he saw the remains of his house and his family. "Five minutes after getting the birth certificate, I was getting their death certificates."

What can I tell you about Aser and Aseel, or the other hundreds—if not thousands[2]—of infants that have been killed by Israeli bombardment in the last 10 months? I can't talk about their accomplishments or the things they loved because they didn't get a chance for any of that. I can tell you about their loved ones—at least the ones that remain—like Muhammad who now has to find some way to move forward, without his beloved wife, holding forever the knowledge that he outlived his children. I can tell you that every minute without ceasefire means more parents who will never see their children again and children who will have to grow up without their parents.

Maybe I can tell you that "Aser" means "captivating"[3], that his parents couldn't keep their eyes off of him, couldn't stop watching him squirm and yawn, and breathe in his sleep. Maybe I can tell you that "Aseel" means "evening"[4], that looking at her was like looking at the stars beginning to rise and all the possibilities they might represent, spelled out across the heavens.

I don't know why Jumana chose the names she did—just as with any name there are multiple meanings, and maybe those aren't what she had in mind. Either way, I hope the children of Gaza captivate us, that the constellations of their possible futures are burned into our eyes, that we weep for the ones that have been stolen from us, and that we fight like hell for the living.

First published August 23, 2024

Do
not
tire
of
doing
good.

Do Not Tire of Doing Good

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9)

Have you heard the one about the persistent widow? Story goes, she experienced an injustice—we don't really know what it was—so she went to the judge of her community, knocked on his door, and asked for his help. Problem was, this judge was corrupt as they come, so rather than help, she got a door slammed in her face. But we know her as the *persistent* widow, right? So day after day, she came back, knocking at his door, and eventually, he just got so sick of her stubbornness that he did what she wanted.

I've been thinking about this story a lot over the past ten months, and I'm thinking about it today on the national Arms Embargo Now day of action.

I wonder what she wanted. It's a fairly low stakes parable as Jesus tells it, so we usually assume it was something trivial, but what if it wasn't? Do you think the judge rolled his eyes when she told him her story? Do you think he told her how much of a tragedy it was before asking her to stop knocking? Do you think he explained why it was already dealt with, when she could see that wasn't true?

Do you think he told her, as calmly as he could, that there was nothing more he could do? Do you think, in the dark evenings, before the morning came and she would rise knock again, do you think some part of her believed him?

If you call or write to your Member of Parliament to demand an arms embargo—for Canada to cut itself out of the deadly equation that has led to over 40 000 dead Palestinians, including more than 16 000 children—they will tell you that they have already done all they can do. They will tell you about the March 18 motion where Liberals and NDP MPs voted to suspend all future arms permits to Israel. They will tell you that this is "in effect" the arms embargo you are asking for, but that is simply not the case. Canada can still fund Israel's assault by purchasing Israeli weapons—like we did in December when Bill Blair announced a $43 million purchase of Israeli missiles, or in May when the Department of National Defense hosted Israeli arms trials in Alberta. Canada still has hundreds of millions of dollars worth of arms export permits issued before March which are simply on hold, ready to go whenever political will shifts.

Most importantly, Canada is still able to ship weapons through the "US loophole," where American bodies can buy arms and components from Canada and immediately ship them to Israel. This is set to happen right now as Biden plans to purchase 50 000 high explosive mortars from Quebec company *General Dynamics* as part of his recently announced $20 billion arms package.

Believe it or not, I don't actually want to talk about how my country is aiding and abetting ten months of death in Gaza. I want to talk about that response: "there's nothing more we can do."

Since when are we okay with that?

Since when are we willing to accept that, faced with death, starvation, and suffering on such a massive scale, we have exhausted all possible options? Since when are we willing to accept that there *are* limited options in such a scenario? Since when are we willing to accept anything less than the utmost creativity and courage when it comes to saving our neighbours lives? Bombs are still falling; kids are still dying. There is more we can do.

Have you heard the one about the mustard seed? Story goes, it's this tiny seed—one of the smallest around—but when planted it becomes a massive plant, big enough to shelter many birds in its branches.

Jesus used this little seed to exemplify the power of a small but creative faith, and we need mustard seed faith right now. The scale of inhumanity is so large that we can easily feel there's nothing more we can do—or even that there's nothing we can do at all. If you've read any other installment of Imago Palestina, you'll know that's not the case either.

We need to keep knocking on the door. We need to keep demanding courageous and creative solutions and not settling for "there's nothing more we can do." We need to keep planting mustard seeds, and we need to believe that a better world will grow.

On Sept. 10, after consistent pressure from people of conscience across Canada, Mélanie Joly committed to blocking the General Dynamics mortar sale to the US.

Dozens of permits still remain open for fulfillment.

First published August 21, 2024

Yousef & Leena of Thamra

Leena is still alive. Yousef was martyred on Oct 12, 2024

"Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them." (Psalm 126:6)

"This project is not only about planting seeds. It's also about planting an idea: the idea of resilience and determination against all the attempts to uproot and displace people from their land." - Leena

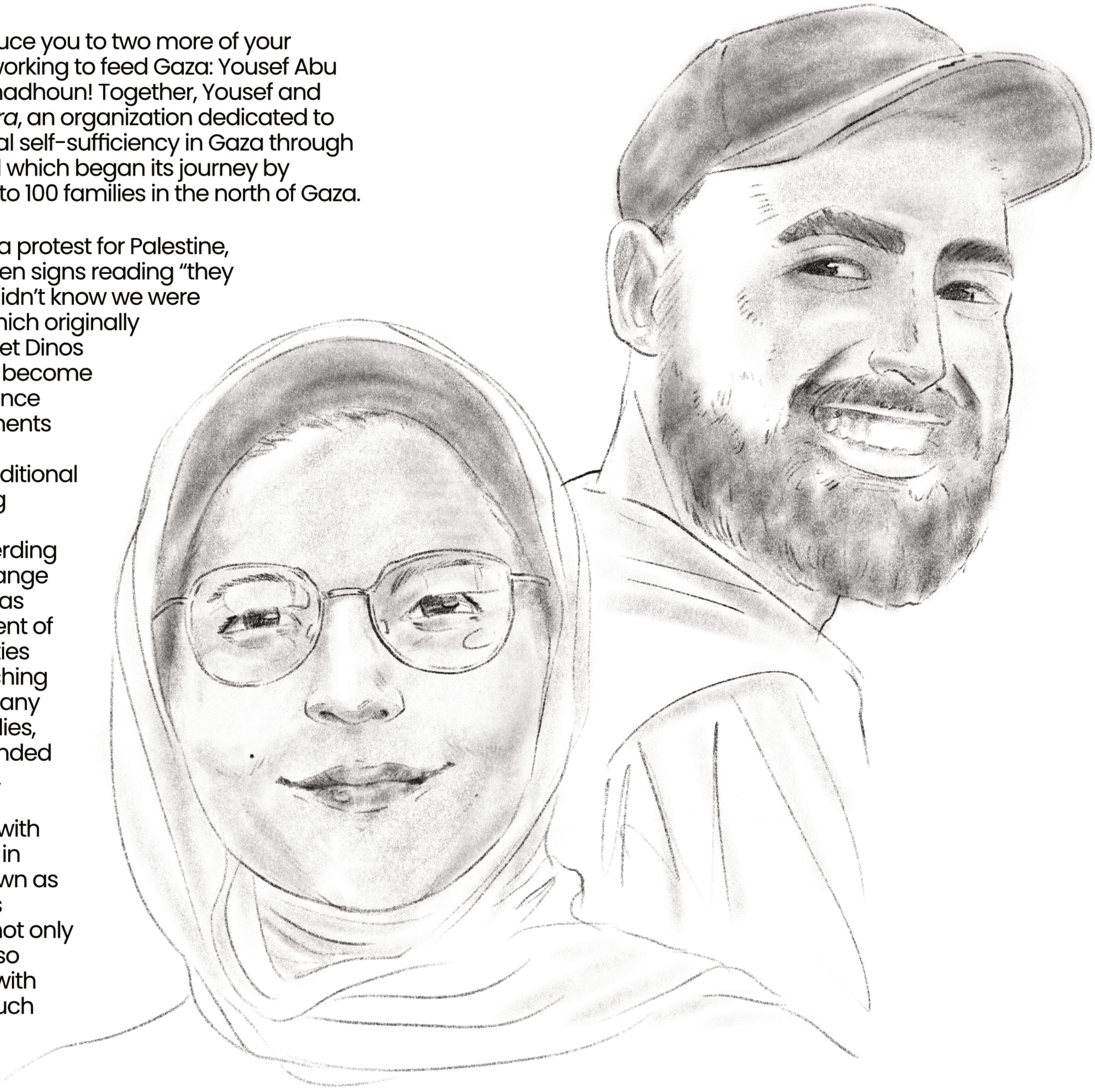
The other day, I introduced you to Hamada Shoo, a food blogger who uses his cooking skills to transform what meagre food remains in Gaza into filling meals for Gaza's children. I also talked about how, despite his best efforts, the Israeli blockade of Gaza is what's causing the starvation Gazans are experiencing, and how only by ending the occupation will humanitarian efforts prove anything more than a bandaid solution.

Today I'd like to introduce you to two more of your neighbours who are working to feed Gaza: Yousef Abu Rabea and Leena Almadhoun! Together, Yousef and Leena founded *Thamra*, an organization dedicated to developing agricultural self-sufficiency in Gaza through urban gardening, and which began its journey by distributing seedlings to 100 families in the north of Gaza.

If you've ever been to a protest for Palestine, you're sure to have seen signs reading "they tried to bury us, they didn't know we were seeds." The phrase, which originally comes from Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos, has become emblematic of resistance and resilience movements the world over, but for Palestine it is given additional resonance by the long lineage of Palestinian farming. From shepherding to olive pressing to orange growing, agriculture has been a core component of Palestinian communities and economies stretching back centuries. Like many other Palestinian families, Yousef's family has tended their land in Beit Laiha, Northern Gaza, for multiple generations, with his family specializing in strawberries, also known as "Red Gold." Yet, Israel's assault on Gaza has not only killed its people but also devastated the land, with White Phosphorous, such as was used as early as October, remaining in and poisoning the soil.

For Yousef and Leena, herself a photographer and psychology student who works with displaced Gazan children, *Thamra's* urban farming initiative is about refusing to be uprooted from the land that has always nurtured their communities. It's also about refusing to give up on nurturing the land in return, even amidst abject destruction and with every possibility that one airstrike could destroy days of work. Even in the midst of death, Gazans are dedicated to life, even if it's one seedling at a time.

"In spite of all this destruction, people are still insisting on staying, planting, and wanting to rebuild again." - Yousef



First published August 27, 2024

The Volunteers of Ele Elna Elak

"Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common." (Acts 4:32)

"In Ele Elna Elak, a family supports a family!" - Ela Elna Elak Volunteer

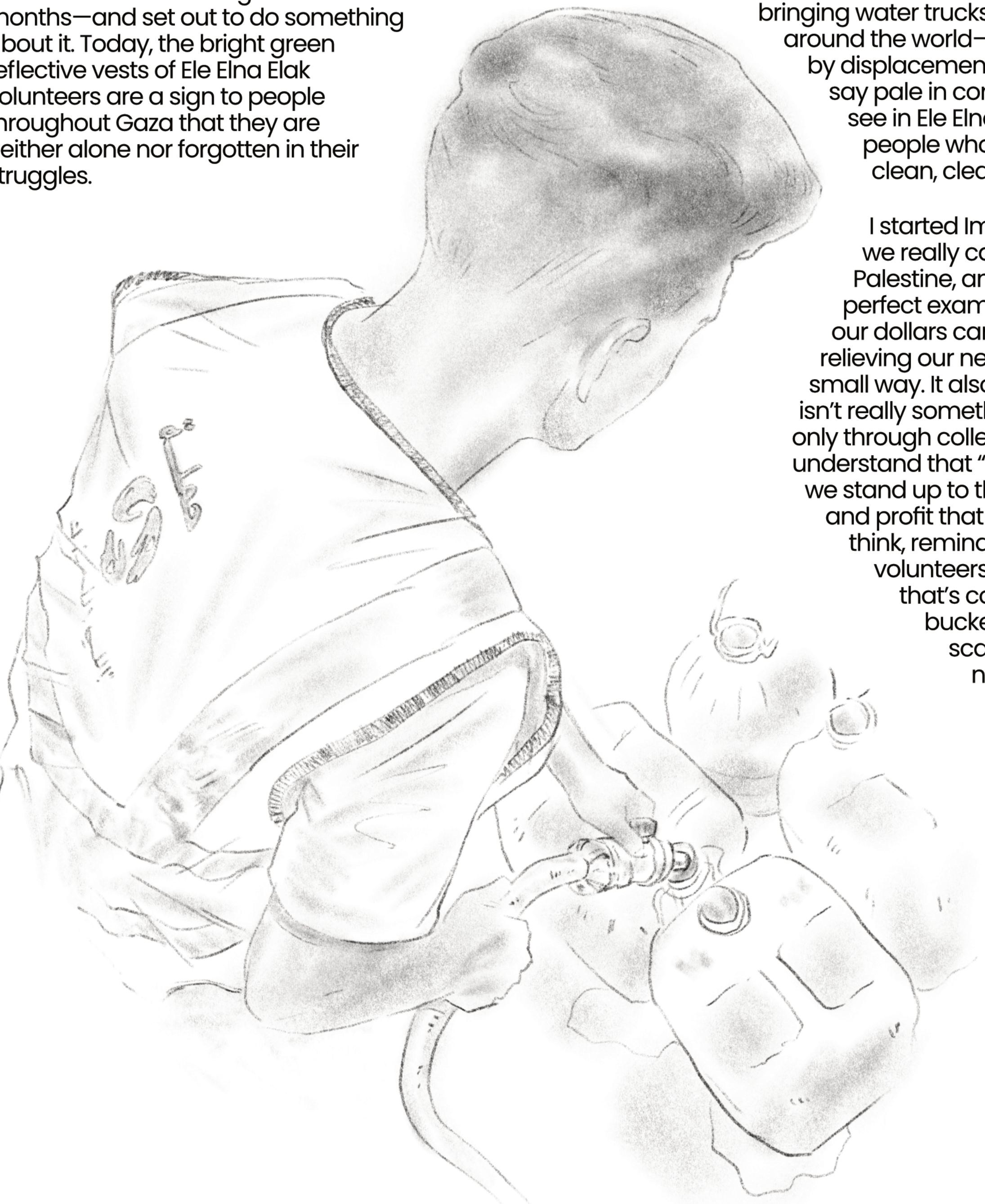
Today, rather than introducing you to just one neighbour, I wanted to talk about the tireless volunteers of Ele Elna Elak.

Ele Elna Elak, which in Arabic means 'what we own, you own,' is a social solidarity initiative founded in 2018 by a team of Gazan students who saw the need in their communities—particularly around food and warm clothing for the winter months—and set out to do something about it. Today, the bright green reflective vests of Ele Elna Elak volunteers are a sign to people throughout Gaza that they are neither alone nor forgotten in their struggles.

As the genocide continues and millions of Gazans find themselves displaced among the rubble, one of the main concerns for our neighbours in Gaza is water. Gaza already had a water crisis due to Israel's blockade and systemic neglect of Gazan infrastructure, as I touched on when I introduced you to Majd Mashharawi, but after the siege began in October, their already limited resources were cut off by Israel. In fact, Israel cutting off water (and electricity) to Gaza was one of the early signs that this assault was not simply about "defending themselves," as cutting off water to a civilian population is considered collective punishment—a war crime.

And so, in the past few months, it has become Ele Elna Elak's mission to bring water back to Gaza. Ele Elna Elak circumvents the destroyed water infrastructure by bringing water trucks—funded by ordinary people around the world—to communities hardest hit by displacements. Frankly, any words I could say pale in comparison to the faces you'll see in Ele Elna Elak's Instagram videos of people who can finally feel the relief of clean, clear water.

I started Imago Palestina to show how we really can help our neighbours in Palestine, and Ele Elna Elak is such a perfect example. It shows, practically, how our dollars can have a tangible effect in relieving our neighbours suffering, if only in a small way. It also demonstrates, how change isn't really something we can do alone, and only through collective action where we understand that "what we own, you own" can we stand up to the systems of imperialism and profit that drive this genocide. It also, I think, reminds us that, while these volunteers can distribute water all day, that's comparatively a drop in the bucket when you consider the scale of this violence, and we need to also direct this collective action at the root causes—the blockade, the occupation, and the evils of colonialism—if we want to make *real* change.



First published August 29, 2024

Murad & Mohammad Na'ja

Martyred on Aug, 29, 2024

"I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears." (Psalm 6:6)

Gaza has gotten more international focus in the past 11 months, but Gaza is not the only part of Palestine where our neighbours need our attention. Over the past few days, the Israeli military has made that perfectly clear, as they launched the largest assault on the West Bank in two decades on Wednesday.

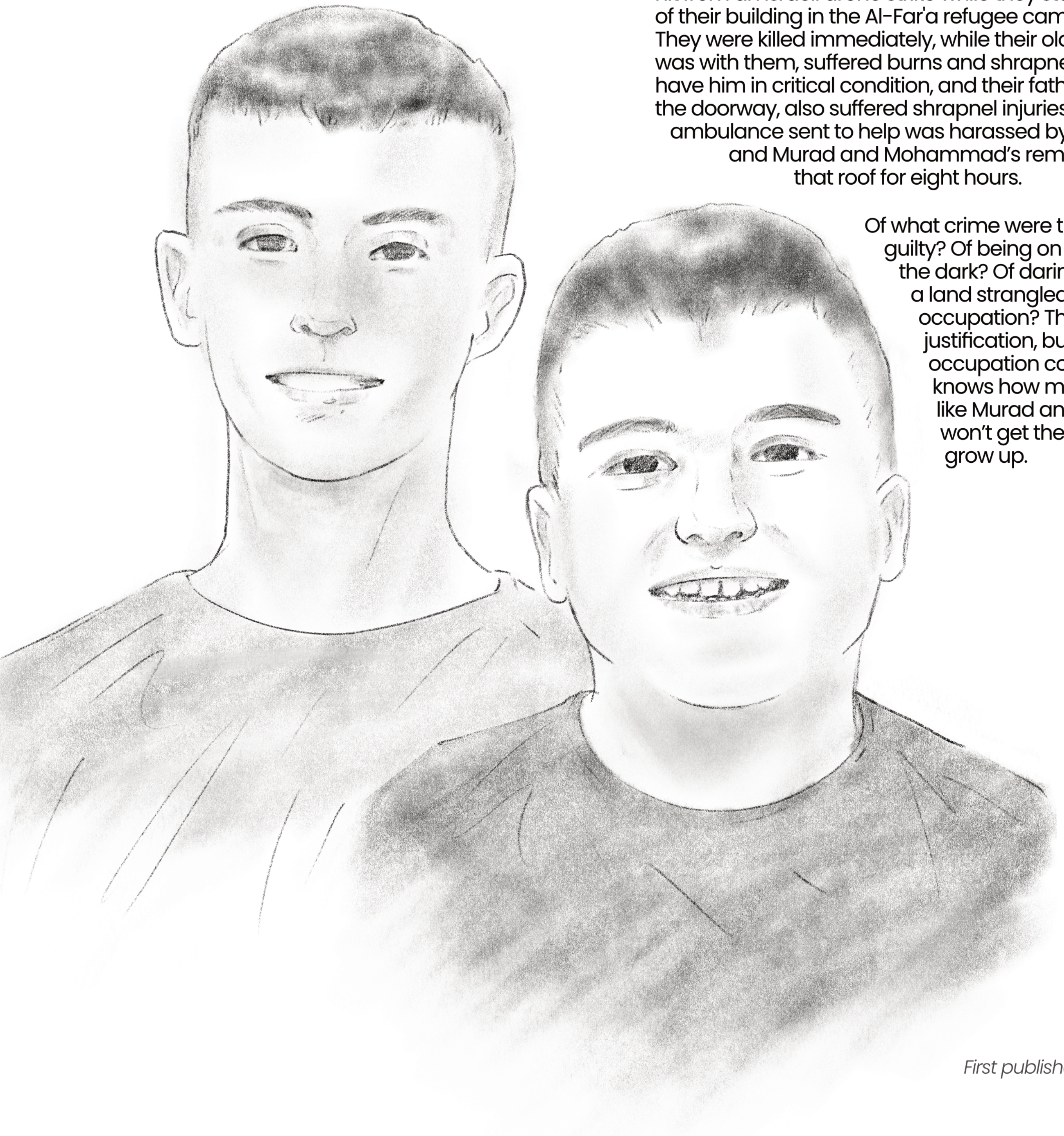
While their claims are the same "anti-terrorist" efforts as in Gaza, we can already see how this is a continuation of the violence in Gaza and the ongoing violence of the occupation.

The targets are refugee camps in Jenin, Tulkarem, and Tubas, and reports on the ground detail destruction of civilian infrastructure with military bulldozers, cutting off electricity and water, and interfering with medical facilities. Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs has also called for the "temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents" (and I'll direct you to my post about Muhammad Bhar to remember what "evacuation" means in this context). Even UN Secretary-General António Guterres called the operations "deeply concerning"[1].

But of course, what matters most is the people.

Murad and Mohammad Na'ja were two teenage brothers, 13 and 17 years old respectively, who were killed by a direct hit from an Israeli drone strike while they stood on the roof of their building in the Al-Far'a refugee camp near Tubas. They were killed immediately, while their older brother, who was with them, suffered burns and shrapnel injuries that have him in critical condition, and their father, standing in the doorway, also suffered shrapnel injuries. The ambulance sent to help was harassed by Israeli forces, and Murad and Mohammad's remains stayed on that roof for eight hours.

Of what crime were these children guilty? Of being on their own roof in the dark? Of daring to grow up in a land strangled by occupation? There is no justification, but as long as the occupation continues, who knows how many more kids like Murad and Mohammad won't get the chance to grow up.

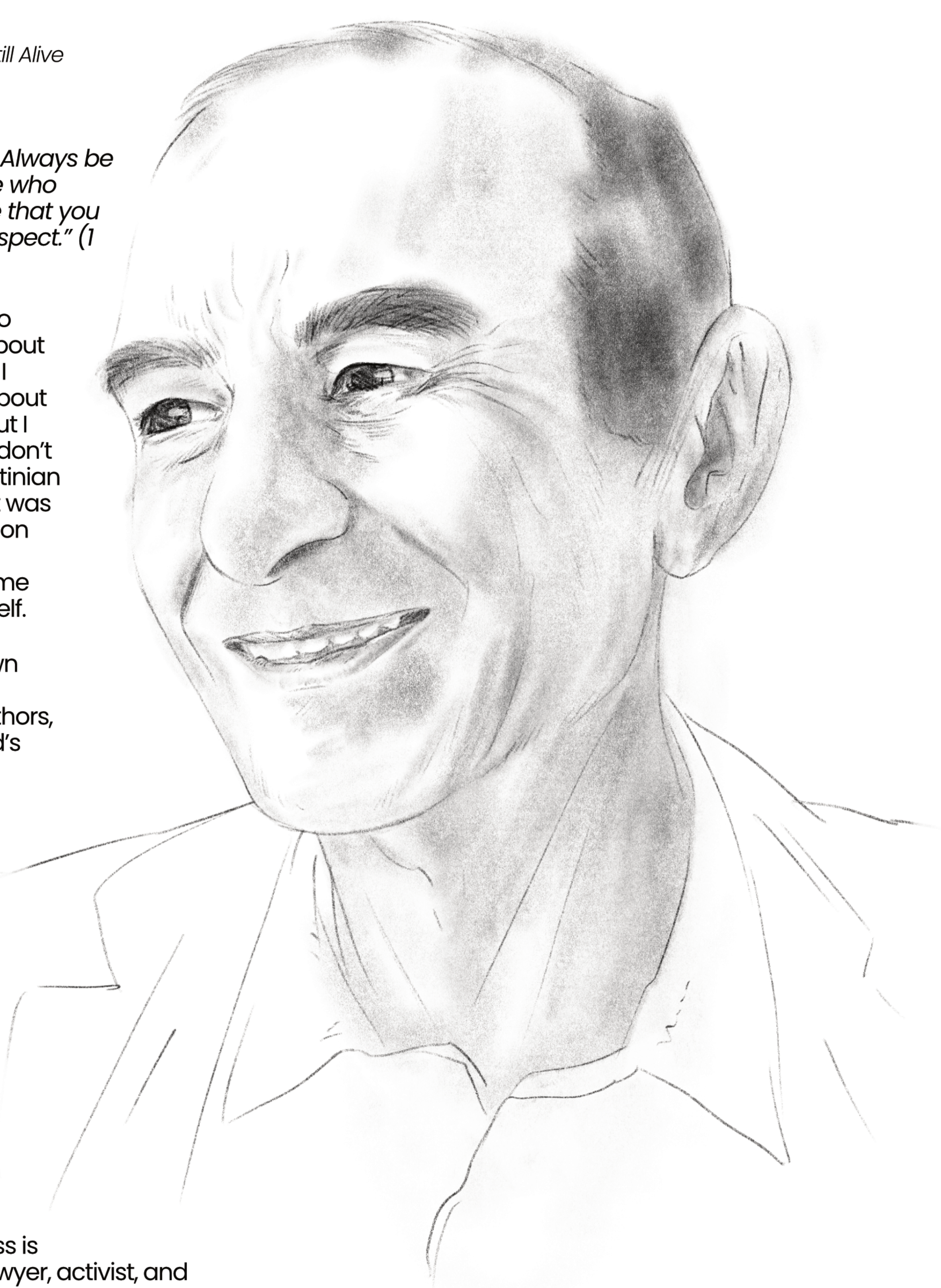


First published August 31, 2024

Raja Shehadeh

Still Alive

Guest-written by Mama G



"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

In October, when my son started going to Pro-Palestinian protests, I was worried about him, so I asked him to share his reasons. I grew up hearing about Israel - I heard about suicide bombers, kibbutz, and the PLO, but I didn't pay much attention to the news. I don't ever remember hearing about the Palestinian people. While I knew there was conflict, it was always 'over there'. It was my son's passion and obvious concern for the Palestinian people that spurred me on to attend some protests, but most of all, to educate myself.

I sought books and articles by well-known authors, starting with Ilan Pappe, Noam Chomsky, and Edward Said, all great authors, but a bit too technical. A book by Edward's daughter, Najla, showed the struggle of Palestinians in exile. Michael Scott-Baumann's *The Shortest History of Israel and Palestine* provided me with a good background of the situation that has been continuing for over 100 years. A very recent book, *The Case for Palestine*, by Dan Kovalik published in March 2024, gave a more up to date picture.

These all gave me great background knowledge, but I was seeking some views from regular Palestinians. I found it in the book, *I Saw Ramallah*, by Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti and then in the writings of Raja Shehadeh, whose likeness is produced above. Raja is a Palestinian lawyer, activist, and writer who turned from fighting, in the law courts, cases of Palestinian lands illegally seized by Israelis to writing about Palestinian life and the daily struggles of the Occupation. If you care about land development, I recommend his book *Palestinian Walks* in which he details several walks over a number of years in the West Bank and how the landscape changed from ancient rolling-hill wilderness to stolen hill tops sheared off for Israeli settlements (very relevant in the current situation). If you wonder what having to cross from the West Bank into Israel is like, I recommend his book *Where the Line Is Drawn.* In these and many more books, Raja portrays Palestinian life under the restrictions of the Occupation - long lines at crossings, fear of settlers, inconsistent access to travel papers, daily humiliations by Israeli forces - in a matter of fact yet poetic way that demonstrates his love of his people and land.

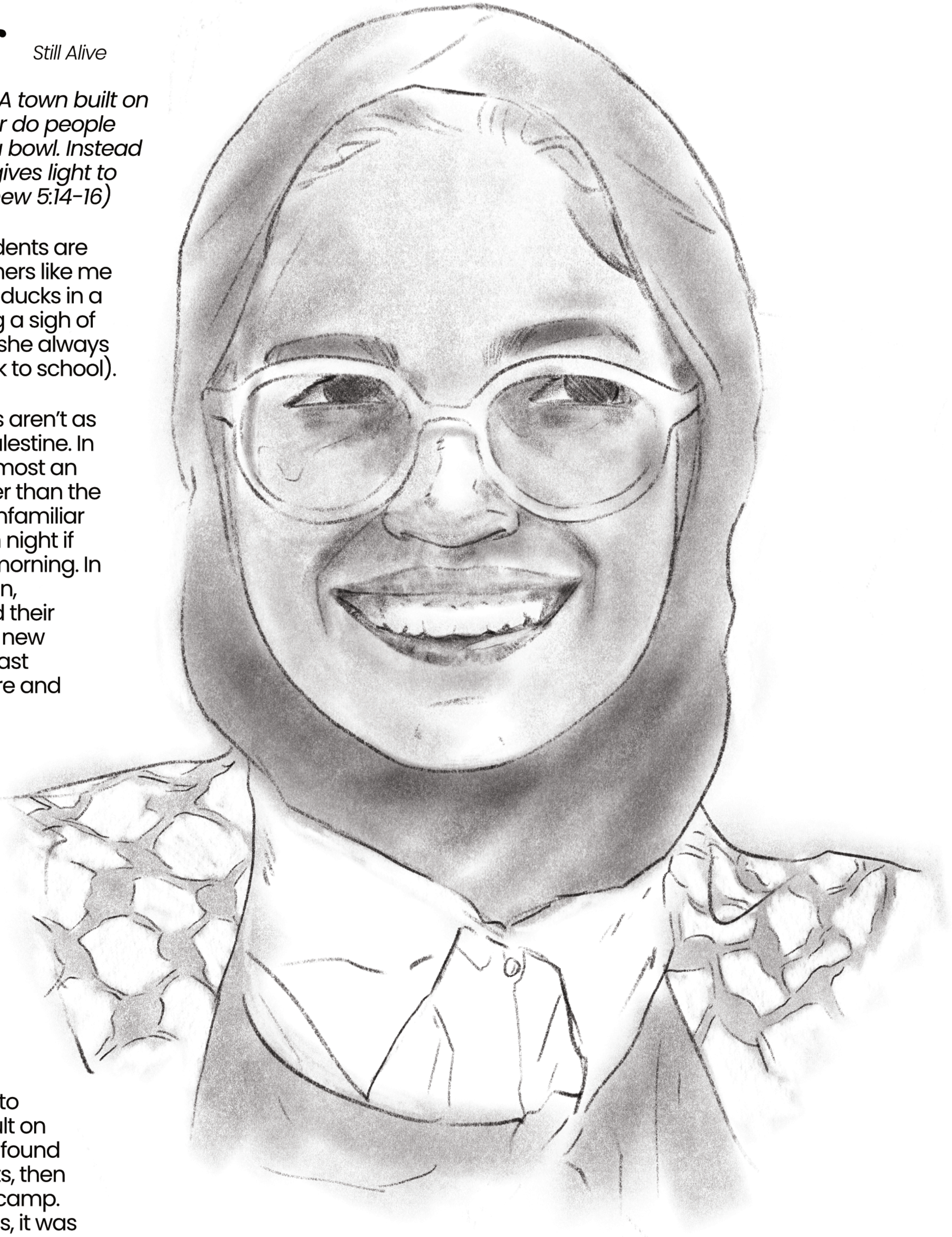
As Christians, we are taught to always have an answer for the hope of our faith, and as I have struggled through complicated conversations about our neighbours in Palestine, I needed to educate myself. Through my reading, I have gained the knowledge to answer some (not all!) questions about the history of the persecution and stifling of the Palestinian people, and how that has all led to what we're seeing today. Mourid Barghouti wrote (paraphrase) that the world sees Palestinians only as terrorists or victims, but he wanted to show the humanity of the Palestinian people. Raja Shehadeh demonstrates the same. I encourage you to educate yourself about these ancient and amazing people.

First published September 3, 2024

Noor Nassar

Still Alive

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5:14-16)



It's the first week of school. Students are heading back to classes, teachers like me are hoping they've got all their ducks in a row, and parents are breathing a sigh of relief (unless you're Mama G—she always hated when we had to go back to school).

But, as you can imagine, things aren't as simple for our neighbours in Palestine. In Gaza, children have missed almost an entire year of school, and rather than the anxiety of new teachers and unfamiliar classmates, they wonder each night if they'll be alive to see the next morning. In the West Bank, students in Jenin, Tulkarem, and Tubas have had their education upended by Israel's new assault which has destroyed vast swathes of civilian infrastructure and resulted in many deaths.[1].

So for the next little while, I wanted to talk about education. You got your reading list yesterday, and today I thought it might be time to meet a teacher.

Noor Nasar is a teacher and law graduate from Rafah, at the southern border of Gaza. Only 24 years old, she graduated from her English Law program in 2022 and gravitated quickly to education. When Israel's assault on Gaza began however, she first found herself cut off from her students, then displaced to Nuseirat refugee camp. Despite her own circumstances, it was seeing the need in the children around her that drover her to action: an initiative she called "Schools without Borders."

Just like the inspirations "Doctors without Borders," Noor's organization seeks to bring education to "students affected by wars and conflicts," starting right at home in Gaza. Using portable materials—including her instantly-recognizable collapsing whiteboard—Noor and her fellow educators bring learning directly to Gaza's students, often setting up 'classrooms' right amidst the rubble.

I often find something I can relate to in the neighbours I introduce you to, but with Noor, I just can't help imagining myself in her place. She's a teacher and a talented artist, we graduated a year apart, and her students...well any one of them could be in my class tomorrow and I wouldn't bat an eye. And yet, she has to carry her classroom through bombed out buildings and I...don't. It doesn't matter what comparison I bring, nothing will compare. But she does it anyway.

"One of the goals of the occupation is ignorance...In order to overcome the difficult circumstances that we are all going through, we need to stand together and support each other." - Noor Nassar

First published September 5, 2024

Renad Attallah

Still Alive

"Seen as it's around the time everyone around the world is returning back to school except us, I wanted to say, I miss my school, my friends that I have no idea of there whereabouts, I miss education, this is the second year in a row that we've received no education and no hope for our futures." - Renad, Sept. 1, 2024

In the last couple installments of Imago Palestina, we talked curriculum and met a teacher. Now it's time to meet a few students—or, at least, children who *should* be students.

There are no operating schools in Gaza. Even its universities have been either destroyed or rendered completely inoperable. What school buildings remain serve as shelters, but are still regularly attacked by the Israeli offensive[1]. While people like Noor work to provide some education to students, the education system in Gaza has been demolished.

It is in this context that I'd like to introduce you to 10 year old Renad Attallah also known online as @renadfromgaza.

At first look, Renad doesn't look like how we might imagine a child in Gaza. She is clean, her hair brushed, with a big smile on her face. Really, she looks more like the kids in Canada who pose for pictures on the first day of school, dressed in new finery.

But, of course, that's just the first look. Renad is a video presenter, and a very talented one, gaining more than 760 thousand followers on Instagram alone for her chipper cooking videos (she's as much a magician with meagre provisions as Hamada Shaqoura, who we talked about a few weeks ago). The smiling, happy kid is a performance—and by that I don't mean to suggest it's ingenuine, but rather that what we get to see is only a tiny sliver of Renad's life. We can't forget that, even if Renad can smile for us, she and her family are still displaced, still surviving on rations, still at risk for a bomb or a bullet every minute of every day. Just recently, Renad spoke about contracting impetigo, an incredibly painful and contagious skin infection, which she contracted because personal hygiene items and antibiotics are basically impossible to find.

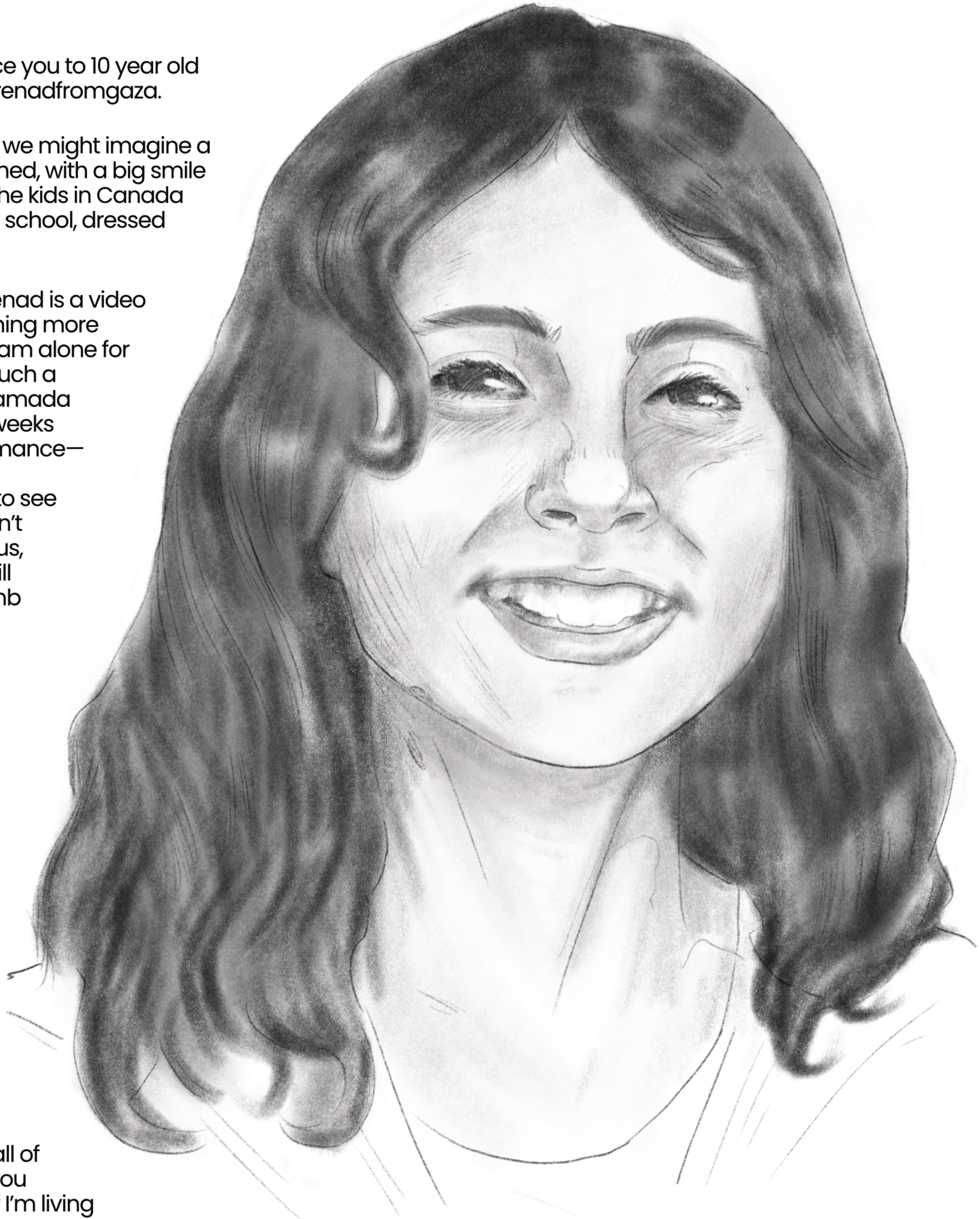
If you scroll down Renad's Instagram, you'll see a lot of her smiling face, but you'll also see a few things that break the pattern. You'll see her impetigo lesions. You'll see her downcast eyes from when she was displaced in August. If you scroll far enough, you'll see the aftermath of an Israeli strike on the home next to hers. But for me, the one that sticks out is a message, white text on a black background, that reads:

"I receive hundreds of messages from all of you telling me to stay safe, can any of you inform me exactly how I can stay safe if I'm living through a genocide, where a civilian, child or elderly or anything else along those lines is not differentiated? [sic]"

This is the reality. Despite the smile, the apparent cleanliness, the indefatigable optimism, Renad is in the same boat as the rest of Gaza's children. As much as we want her to be safe, to succeed, to keep smiling, that can only happen if we end the genocide and dismantle the occupation.

For what it's worth, Renad did post some first day of school pics, from a couple years ago, the other day. I for one would like to see her smile *because of something* again, not just in spite of everything. I hope that's something we're all willing to fight for.

"For now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." (1 Corinthians 13:12)



First published September 9, 2024

Tala Abu Ajwa

Martyred on Sept. 3, 2024

"She'd say to me: Baba, why can't we live like the other kids?"

Did you know that children have a right to play?

As a teacher, it's one of the first things I learned in teacher's college. It's part of Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with signatories recognizing "the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child," and good pedagogical research these days attests to play being a crucial part of children's learning processes. I saw it in action today as I taught a class of gleeful and energetic kindergarteners and watched them explore, investigate, and interpret their worlds through play of all sorts.

Last week, on Tuesday September 3rd (the first day of school here in Canada), ten year old Tala Abu Ajwa begged her parents to let her go play with her friends. She promised them she would be home before long, and eventually her mother gave in and let her go down to the street outside their central Gaza City apartment, equipped with her favourite pink roller skates, a gift from her father before the siege began.

A few minutes later, Israel dropped an airstrike on their street. Tala's father rushed down to find her. He recognized her bleeding body by the pink roller skates on her feet.

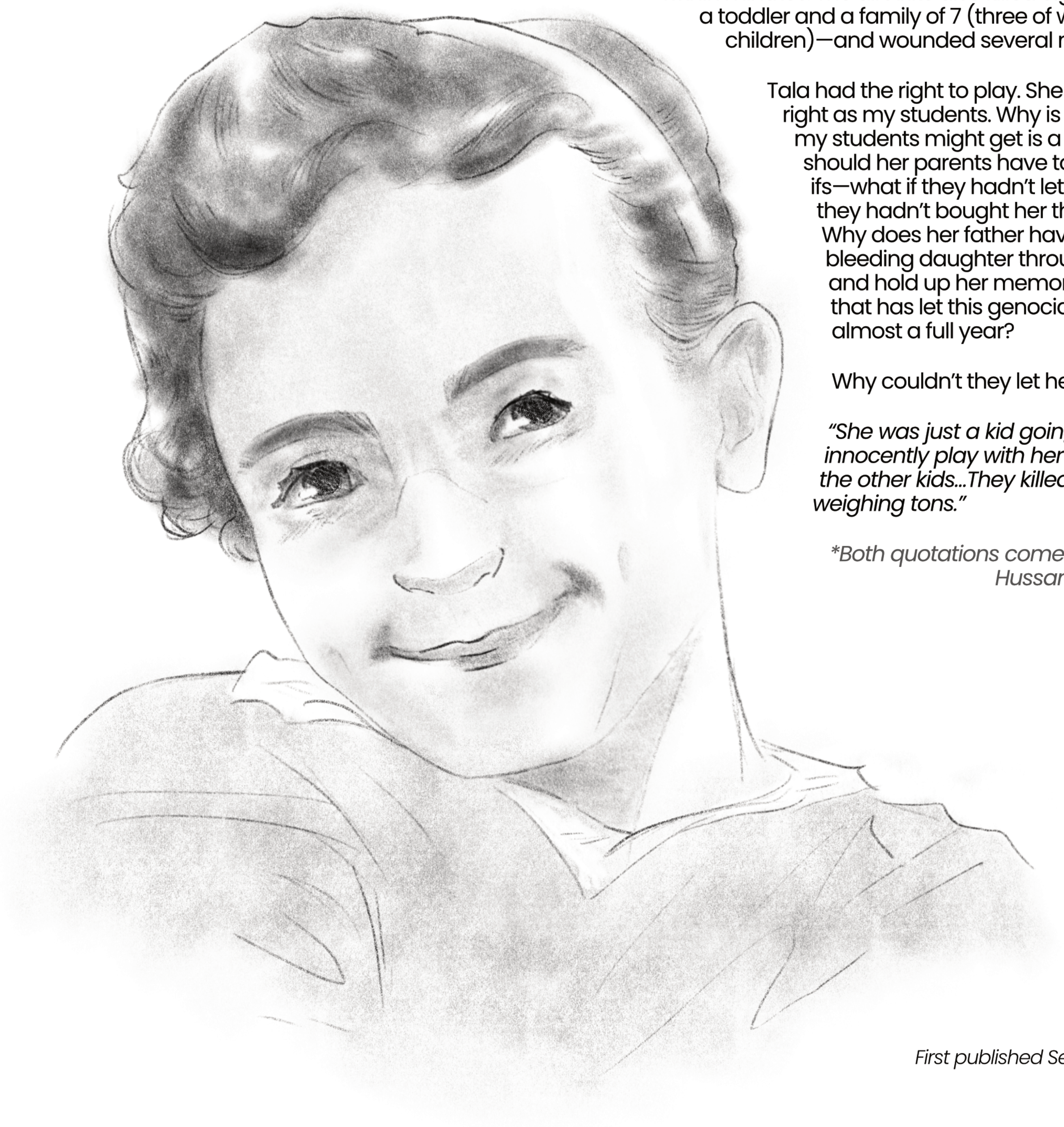
Tala's neck had been shredded by shrapnel, and though her father carried her to the nearby Baptist hospital, there was little the doctors could do for her, and she was gone within minutes. The airstrike also killed eight other people—a toddler and a family of 7 (three of whom were children)—and wounded several more children.

Tala had the right to play. She had just as much right as my students. Why is she gone while all my students might get is a time out? Why should her parents have to suffer the what ifs—what if they hadn't let her go? what if they hadn't bought her those roller skates? Why does her father have to carry his bleeding daughter through the streets and hold up her memory before a world that has let this genocide continue for almost a full year?

Why couldn't they let her play?

"She was just a kid going down to innocently play with her roller skates and the other kids...They killed her with airstrikes weighing tons."

**Both quotations come from Tala's father, Hussam, speaking to NPR*



First published September 11, 2024

Khaled Juma

Still Alive

Palestine is known for its poetry, and no poem has touched my soul more than "Oh Rascal Children of Gaza" by Khaled Juma.

Khaled, who was born in Rafah, which is now rubble, and grew up in a refugee camp like those the IDF continue to assault, has written much more than just this one poem in his life. He's written short stories; he's written plays. He's written more than 100 songs. He's written for magazines and news agencies. He's written words that have been translated for readers around the world. He's written children's books.

But this poem he wrote in 2014—while Israeli bombardment over the summer killed more than 500 children—and if you read his words on Facebook, you'll see he's still writing—still crying out—for Gaza's rascal children.

I first heard this poem in a video by YouTube video essayist Shaun. Shaun talks about reading the poem for the first time himself and being struck by the closeness he felt to Khaled—that he too knows his own share of rascal children who "are always playing outside my house and whose shouts and games get picked up on my microphone when I'm trying to stream or record audio."

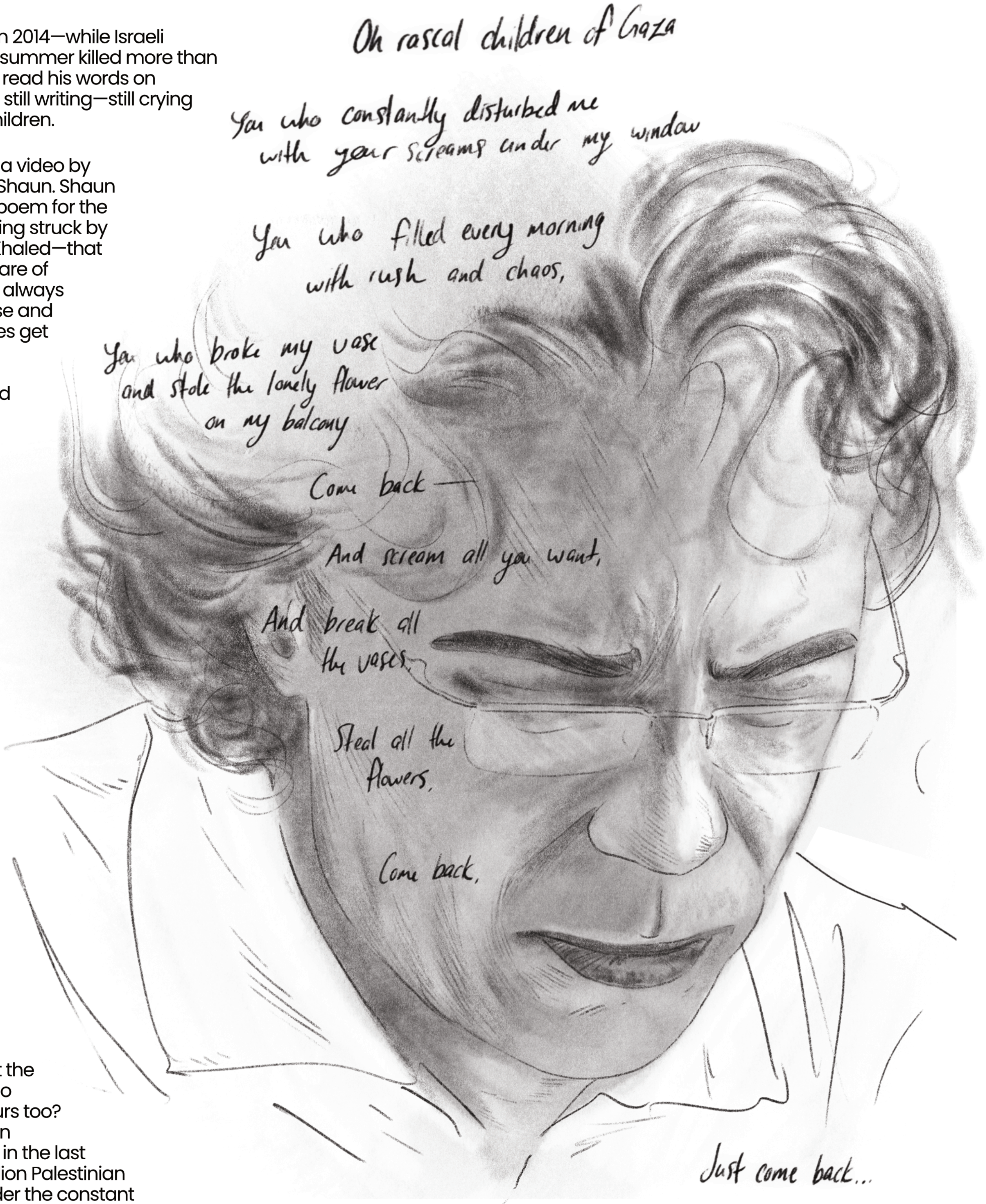
My rascal children scream and play in the dozens. Their rush and chaos make me pull out my hair. A teacher's guiltiest pleasure comes when that one kid—you know the one—is off sick today. Take that sniffle and make it a bomb, and I don't know what I wouldn't give to feel their beautiful chaos again.

Who are your rascal children? Whose scraped knees have you bandaged after you told them not to go that fast? Whose toys did you trip over trying to get to their bed? Who keeps you up at night wondering why they haven't called?

Is it too much to say that the 500+ Gazan children who Israel killed in 2014 are ours too? Or the 10 000+ Palestinian children who Israel killed in the last 11 months? Or the 2.4 million Palestinian children who still live under the constant threat of starvation, displacement, or any other of the occupation's many violences? I don't think so.

I don't have enough breath to cry "come back" that many times.

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" (Matthew 19:14)



Oh rascal children of Gaza

You who constantly disturbed me
with your screams under my window

You who filled every morning
with rush and chaos,

You who broke my vase
and stole the lonely flower
on my balcony

Come back —

And scream all you want,

And break all
the vases,

Steal all the
flowers,

Come back,

Just come back...

First published September 13, 2024

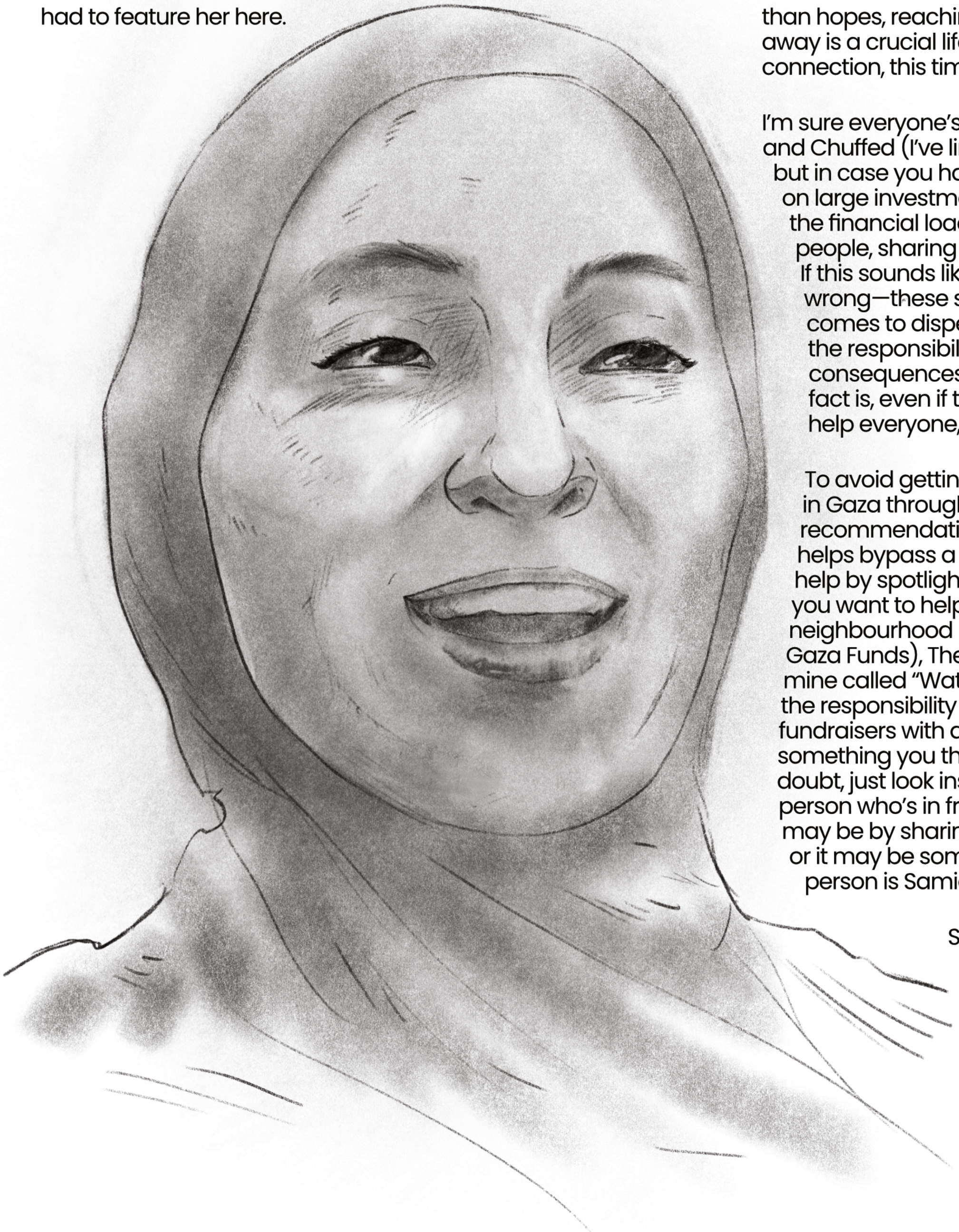
Samia Anwar

Still Alive

Howdy all! Apologies for the radio silence—I caught a bug from one of my students last Friday and it basically knocked me out for most of the week. Nevertheless, I'm very excited to introduce you to today's neighbour!

This is Samia Anwar who currently lives in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, with her fifteen other family members. After their house was destroyed by the Israeli offensive, Samia and her family took up residence in a tent alongside hundreds of other internally-displaced refugees in an encampment attached to a school—you might remember from our previous post about The Ones We Don't See how schools that have been left standing in Gaza have been converted to shelters like this. Samia spends a lot of her time trying to cheer up children, including her own younger family members—who have been displaced, helping them continue their studies in whatever way they can, and doing her best to share the reality of their situation, and the beauty that still exists in Gaza, with people around the world.

Because, that's one of the cool things about Samia: she actually reached out to me! She sent me a message on Instagram after I made my post about Ele Ena Elak, and from the moment I saw her infectious smile I knew I had to feature her here.



I've talked previously about the importance of the internet in connecting us to our neighbours in Palestine—about how journalists on the ground like Bisan can share real, unvarnished truths, and how vital things like e-Sims are for allowing Palestinians the right to communicate even as their infrastructure is under siege—but we can't forget how important social media is for our neighbours in Palestine to share their own stories and situations.

Through Samia's pictures and videos we can see the things that matter most to her, both positive—the faces of her loved ones, the wavering letters her learning siblings scratch out, the light that sparkles off of the Mediterranean as it crashes on Gaza's beaches—and negative—the tiny space they are forced to live in, the rubble that chokes all around, the sewage water that splashes outside the thin walls of her tent. She is the real face behind the numbers we see on Al Jazeera, the real body that feels the squeeze when we hear the word "displacement," the real person who has been living through all this for almost a year now.

For regular people like Samia, who have no access to work and for whom "humanitarian aid" and "ceasefire" are nothing more than hopes, reaching out for the solidarity of their neighbours far away is a crucial lifeline. Once again, the internet facilitates a connection, this time in the form of crowdfunding.

I'm sure everyone's heard of crowdfunding sites like GoFundMe and Chuffed (I've linked more than a few already in this project), but in case you haven't, the basic idea is that, instead of relying on large investment from very rich entities, these sites spread the financial load across hundreds, thousands, even millions of people, sharing what little they have to help those who need it. If this sounds like a utopian image of the sites, well, you're not wrong—these sites can be frustratingly bureaucratic when it comes to dispensing funds, and of course it should not be the responsibility of the average person to pay for the consequences of governments and warmongers—but the fact is, even if this method is imperfect, and even if we can't help everyone, it's still significantly better than nothing.

To avoid getting overwhelmed when helping our neighbours in Gaza through crowdfunding, I have a few recommendations. The first is GazaFunds.com, a site which helps bypass a potential moral morass of deciding who to help by spotlighting individual campaigns (maybe next time you want to help but haven't heard from your friendly neighbourhood portrait artist in a while, you can pop open Gaza Funds), The second is a campaign run by a colleague of mine called "Watermelon Buddies," which focuses on sharing the responsibility of caring for our neighbours by pairing vetted fundraisers with a network of consistent supporters—if that's something you think you could do, give it a look! Finally, when in doubt, just look inside and ask yourself "how can I help the person who's in front of me right now?"—it may be financially, it may be by sharing their story, it may be by attending a protest, or it may be something more creative than that. Today, that person is Samia.

So, I've donated $20, and I challenge you to meet or beat that! You can also follow her on Instagram (@samia20032) to keep up to date with her and her family as they keep on living, even as everything around them tries to tear them down.

First published September 21, 2024

Mariam Barghouti

Still Alive

"In Palestine, being press means being a target. The gear which is meant to protect us has become a marker to attack us." - Mariam Barghouti

One of the hardest parts of doing this project is deciding who to draw.

I've talked before about how impossible the scale of this project is—about how I'm just one person, I'm not a particularly fast artist, and that I will obviously never be able to draw 14+ million people. But the past few weeks have reminded me how it's more than just a mathematical limitation.

I haven't been able to tell you about the 2000 pound US-made bombs[1] that Israel dropped on the Al Mawasi safe area[2], leaving literal craters where entire families were sleeping in their tents. I haven't been able to tell you about the pagers which Israel implanted with explosives before they were imported to Lebanon to allegedly "target" Hezbollah, but nevertheless detonated them amidst the civilian population, killing at least twelve civilians[3], including ten year old Fatima Abdullah[4], and injuring thousands more. And I haven't been able to tell you about how, after this act of terrorism, Israel has begun launching air strikes across southern Lebanon[5], particularly in civilian centres, so far killing more than 500 people. Obviously, it doesn't help that I was sick for almost a week, or that, as we approach a full year of this genocide, there have been more and more in-person actions that demand my time (read to the end for one you can help with!), or that, in these cases, there often weren't even any faces left behind to draw.

My point is there is more going on than any of us can handle alone, and it's in these moments where it feels the most overwhelming that we need to remember to work together. We remember that others have been putting in the work, and while we can't leave it all up to them, we can lean on each other—we all have things we can do to help.

I also mean to say that, while I appreciate those of you who've come to trust my work, I hope I'm not your only source. That's one of the reasons I always love introducing you to Palestinian writers and journalists, because it's through them that you can see the realities on the ground in as first-hand an account as possible.

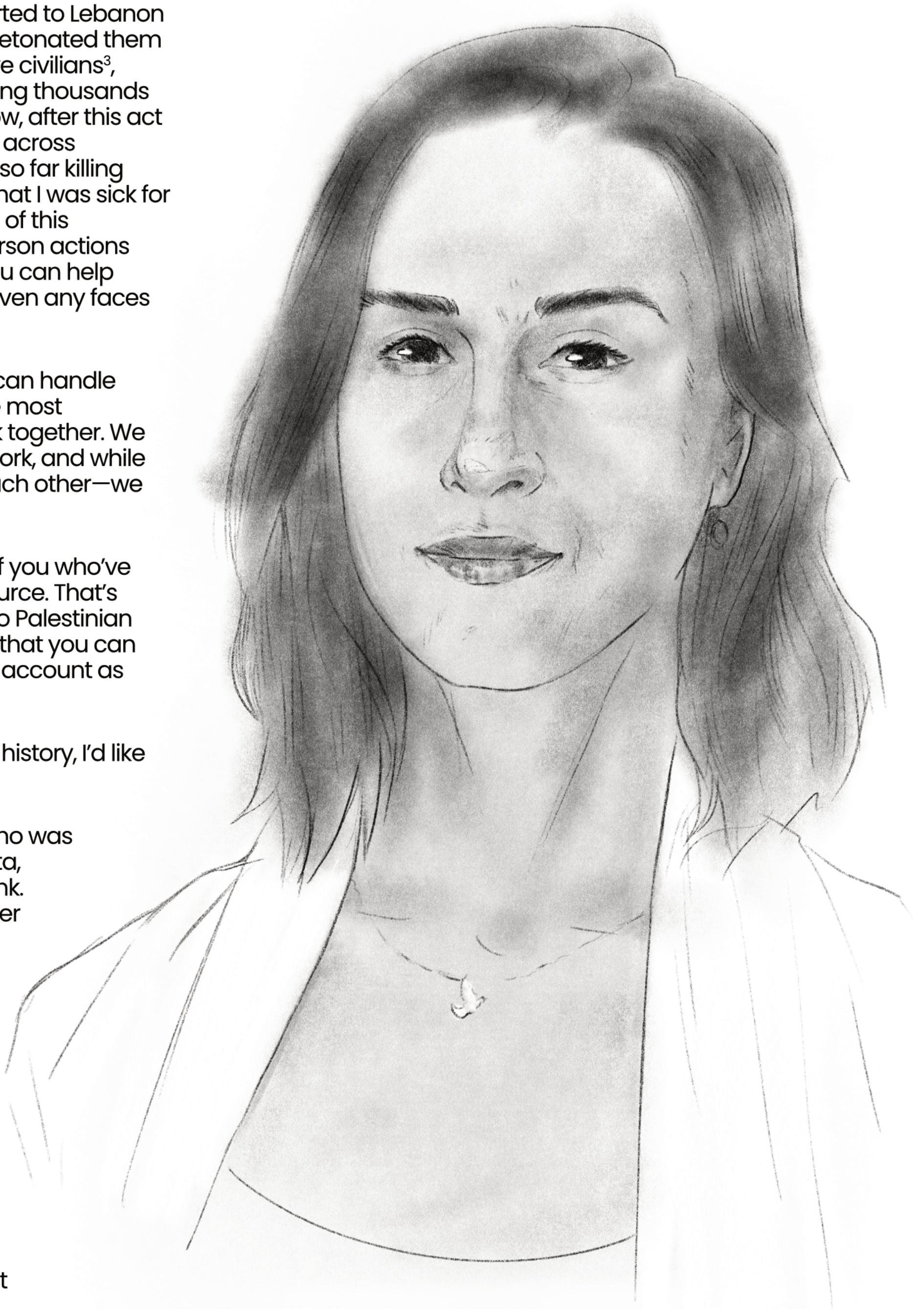
So, after the longest preamble in Imago Palestina history, I'd like to introduce you to Mariam Barghouti!

Mariam is a writer, journalist, and policy analyst who was originally born in the Palestinian diaspora in Atlanta, Georgia, but now lives in Ramallah in the West Bank. She has written extensively for a list of outlets longer than my arm, but which includes Al Jazeera, CNN, The Guardian, Middle East Eye, and Mondoweiss.

Right now, as Israel continues its assault on the West Bank that I first mentioned when I introduced you to Murad and & Mohammad Na'ja, Mariam has been reporting from the ground, bringing up to date images of destruction, interviewing people living in the affected areas, including those resisting Israel's incursion, and providing commentary based on her experience both as a globally trained analyst and a resident of the West Bank—all without a hint of sugar coating.

Moreover, we need the voices of people like Mariam right now more than ever. Just this Sunday, the Israeli military raided Al Jazeera's Ramallah bureau, forcing the staff out during a live broadcast, seizing equipment, and ordering that it be closed for 45 days[6]. As most of you are likely aware, Al Jazeera has been arguably the most comprehensive documenter of Israel's assault on Gaza, so it's unsurprising that, as Israel carries its attacks into the West Bank, they would seek to cut off Al Jazeera's vision.

In this world, I don't know if I can say that the pen—or the placard, or the petition, or the Apple pencil—is mightier than the sword. Every day more bombs, paid for by Western tax dollars, fall on our neighbours in Palestine, and now Lebanon, and right now, that violent power is winning. But I certainly *want* to believe that each of us, bringing our small actions together—raising our voices, sharing these stories, and fighting back—can break that sword. I certainly *know* that the only way to find out is to try.



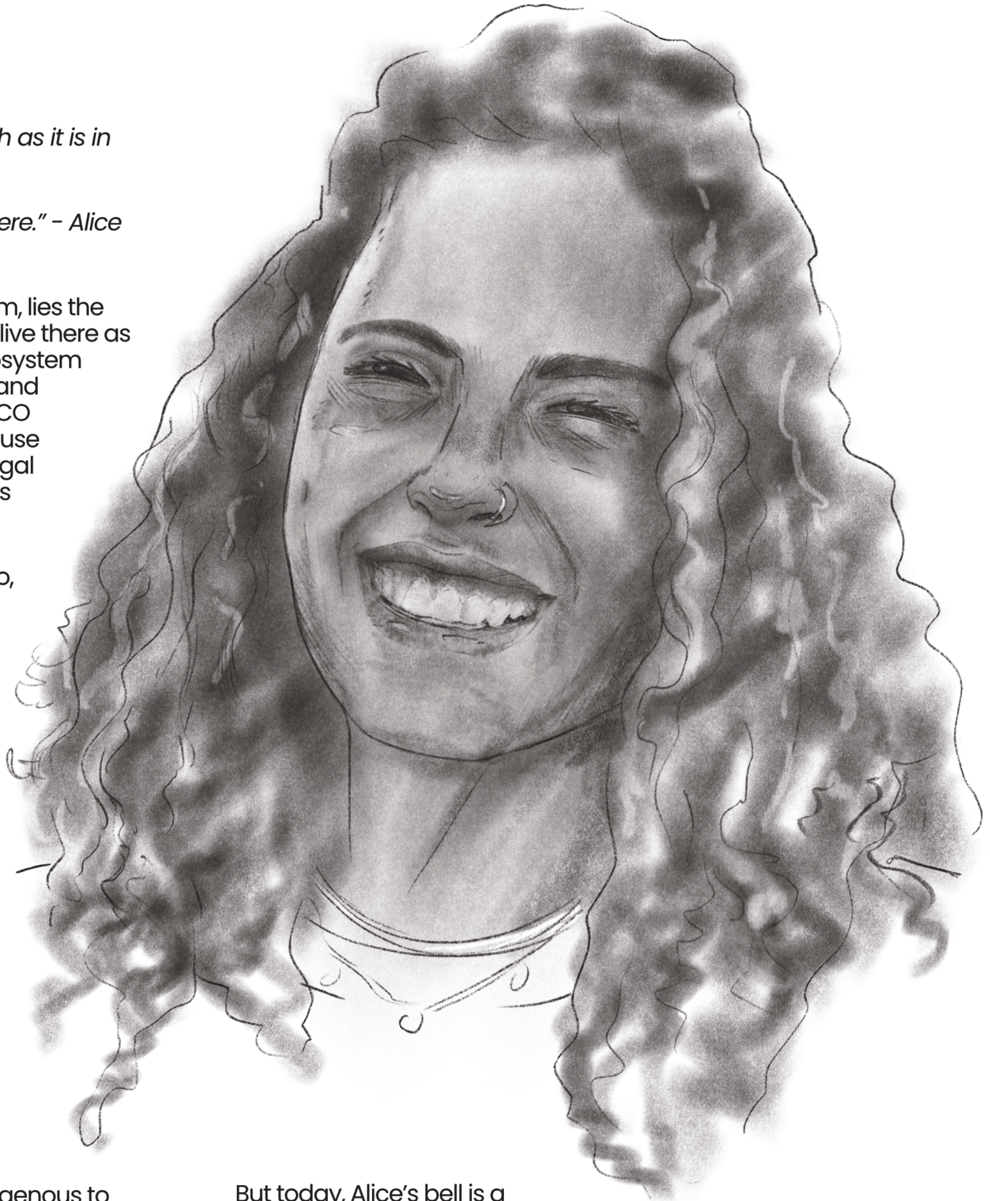
First published September 24, 2024

Alice Kisiya

Still Alive

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."(Matthew 6:10)

"I will ring the bell to remind them that we are here." - Alice Kisiya



In the West Bank, just a few miles from Bethlehem, lies the valley of Al Makhrour, known by the people who live there as "the Heaven of Bethlehem." It's a lush, green ecosystem replete with olive groves, oaks and pine forests, and hundreds of species of wildlife—it's even a UNESCO heritage site—but it earns its heavenly title because this oasis of biodiversity stands in contrast to illegal Israeli settlements and the scars occupation has left on the land all around it.

Today I'd like to introduce you to Alice Kisiya, who, with her family, has been leading the charge to save Al Makhrour.

Alice, who is a health coach and fitness trainer by trade, has become better known in recent years for standing up against Israeli settlers who have been trying to seize the land her family has lived on for generations. For years now, she and her family have been harassed, threatened at gunpoint, and even had their home, her father's restaurant, and the tents they were eventually forced to live in destroyed a combined dozens of times. And this July, despite multiple court victories affirming that her families deeds to the land are genuine, Alice and her family were forced off their land by the Israeli military who unilaterally claimed the land for military purposes.

Alice is also a Christian, and has organized resistance by reminding her Christian siblings around the world that Christianity is indigenous to Palestine, and that the only way to protect our neighbours living in the cradle of Jesus is through international solidarity.

In Toronto, when we're out on the streets protesting for our neighbours in Palestine, we use a lot of different chants. Easily my favourite one, more a song than a chant really, is "Jannah." In Arabic, "jannah" means "heaven" or "paradise"; it's specifically the word in Islam for the place the faithful go when they die, but it also can refer to heavens on earth, as it does in this song when Palestinians—and I believe other Arab communities, since it's a pretty old song—use it to sing of the beauty of their homes.

I cried the first time I heard it. It was overwhelming to hear the hundreds around me join in this celebration of the land they love, this lamentation of what they have been driven from, and this hope of a paradise that we can one day build together.

I find myself thinking of the same thing when Alice talks about her home in Al Makhrour. In a conversation on the Across the Divide podcast, she spoke about her desire to build a church in Al Makhrour's green valley, a church with a bell tower that would ring out whenever injustice rose, to remind them that the people of Al Makhrour—the Christians of Al Makhrour—were still here, and were not going anywhere. Just like "Jannah," it would be a sound drawing all people with love of this land together in friendship and solidarity. I hope to hear that bell one day, and worship with Alice in her church, and I hope you'll be there too.

But today, Alice's bell is a reminder that "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" means standing together for justice, liberation, and equity here and now. Alice can't build her church while she's been forced off her land, and we need to work together to bring her home.

That's why, tomorrow, interfaith communities across the world will be hosting Save Al Makhrour prayer vigils, including here in Toronto. If you are in Toronto, I invite you to join us at 3pm in St. James Park for a time of prayer, reflection, and art making as we stand with Alice and our neighbours in Al Makhrour. If you can't come in person, I urge you to share Alice's story, either on social media (you can find her on Instagram at @kisiyaalice and the campaign at @savealmakhrour), by sharing this email, or just by talking to people you know in person (this is a great thing to bring to a church group!). Moreover, if I've somehow found international readers, you can see if there's a vigil in your city by visiting the @savealmakhrour) Instagram and checking out their list of locations.

Let's do our part to build a little piece of heaven, here and now.

First published September 28, 2024

Fatima Abdullah

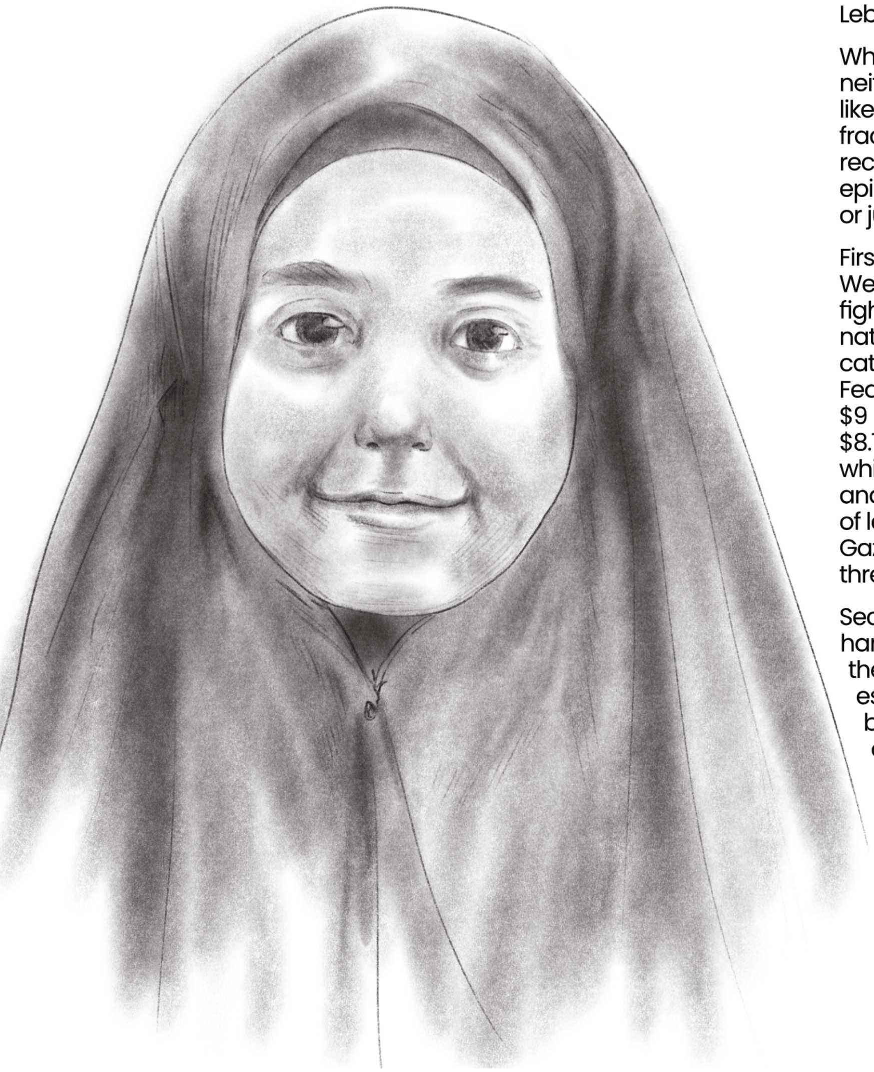
Martyred on September 17, 2024

"Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever./ Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?" (Psalm 44:23b-24)

On September 17th, throughout the bustling streets of South Lebanon, thousands of pagers exploded. The next day, the carnage repeated with walkie talkies. The attacks, perpetrated by Israel, were ostensibly meant to target Hezbollah, a Lebanese resistance group, but there was no way Israel could know where the devices would be when they detonated them, so the result was less of a targeted strike and more of a terror attack, mainly affecting civilians. When all was said and done, 3000 people were injured and 37 people were dead. One of them was ten year old Fatima Abdullah.

Fatima was in fourth grade, and had just started her new school year. She was particularly excited to learn English. Unfortunately, there's not much more I know to share with you.

Even though Fatima was Lebanese, not Palestinian, I thought it was important to introduce you as Israel continues to spread its warfare to neighbouring countries, Lebanon most markedly. You may have heard that, since the pager attack, Israel has bombed Lebanon—particularly Beruit—in a similar fashion as they have been bombing Gaza, choosing targets in densely populated suburban centres. They've killed over 1000 people, displaced roughly 1 million more, and have also announced upcoming ground assaults. You've also almost certainly heard by now of Iran's missile attack against Israel in retaliation for the assassinations of Hezbollah General Secretary Hasan Nasrallah in these Beruit bombings and Hamas' political leader Ismail Haniyeh, the latter of whom was killed on Iranian soil.



I don't have words to express the horror of all of this, how this violence seems to be cartwheeling out of control (as if it was ever in control in the first place) and the ones who should be putting a stop to it are fanning the flames.

Because let's be clear about one thing: the genocide in Gaza and Israel's colonial project are still at the centre of this.

A dominant narrative about the current crisis is that Arab countries—particularly Iran and Lebanon, but also others like Yemen and Syria—have been launching unprecedented strikes against Israel and are responsible for escalating the situation. The reality is, while any armed response is an escalation, we can see that the pattern often starts with Israeli aggression.

In the case of Iran, Israel first attacked, unprompted, on April 1st, bombing the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria. Iran retaliated on April 13th with a barrage of missiles, most of which were shot down. Israel's next strike hit closer to home, with the aforementioned assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the man responsible for Hamas' side of the ceasefire negotiations, in Tehran. Iran's recent missiles came in response.

In the case of Hezbollah, they've actually been in conflict with the Israeli military for a year now. On October 8th of last year, when Israel's bombardment of Gaza had begun, Hezbollah began launching rockets across Israel's northern border, initially targeting military posts in Shebaa Farms. Crucially, they announced their intentions to be in solidarity with Gaza, and that their attacks would stop when Israel stopped its attacks on Gaza. Looking back farther, it's important to recognize that Hezbollah as an organization was founded to repel the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

While I'm trying to give a very concise account of events, I am neither a professional historian nor a military strategist. If you'd like more detailed discussions of the wider ongoing military fracas, I've included some useful resources below—I'd particularly recommend the On the Nose (the Jewish Currents podcast) episode "The Escalating Regional War." Rather than try to explain or justify this violence, the point I'm trying to make is twofold:

First, that the unconditional support that Israel receives from Western countries, including the US and Canada, allows it to pick fights with regional powers and invade a foreign sovereign nation with impunity. While the US is struggling at home with the catastrophic results of Hurricane Helene—in the face of which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced a $9 billion funding shortfall—those in power have directed another $8.7 billion dollar military aid package to Israel. Never forget that while US politicians may claim they want a ceasefire—in Gaza and now in Lebanon—they still have not used their easiest point of leverage: *not* sending Israel billions of dollars. The genocide in Gaza should have been *over* by now, and yet as it drags on it threatens to drag the rest of the Middle East down with it.

Second, I refuse to forget about Fatima. I refuse. Do you know how hard it was to even find a picture of her to reference? And yet there is no end of discussion about how Iran's missiles may have escalated the conflict and no shortage of pundits speaking breathlessly about how 'advanced' and "brilliant" Israel's pager attack on Lebanon was. As governments pour more fuel on the fire, as we approach a full year of genocide, I cannot stop asking how many more people like Fatima have to die before we can say enough is enough? How many more like Tala, like Murad & Mohammad, like Aser & Aseel, like Nagham, like Majed, like Refaat, like Muhammad, like Hind?

Sanctions now. Arms embargo now. Ceasefire now. End the occupation now.

First published October 2, 2024

"Dear children.
let us not love
with words or speech
but with actions
and in truth."

With Actions and in Truth

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)

“When you pray, move your feet.” - West African proverb oft repeated by Christian civil rights leader John Lewis

As much as Jesus is remembered for the words he said—the parables and the beatitudes, the prayers and the admonitions, the tearful whispers in the garden or the tender reminders after the stone rolled away—it’s important to remember that he was also a man of action.

He plucked grain with his disciples on the sabbath, he mixed dirt and spit to heal the blind, he welcomed children, he ate with the marginalized, he flipped tables in a temple corrupted by money and bureaucracy. He was crucified not just because he talked about the kingdom of heaven, but because he also acted like it actually *was* within us.

It’s because of this active life that I end each post with three types of prayer requests: with the heart, the voice, and the hands. I think it’s particularly easy for us Christians to stick with the first one—offering a prayer to God in our hearts—as it’s likely the most comfortable. It’s the one that gets the most press in our churches, and it’s probably the first, if not the only, way most of us learned how to pray. But if we think back to our first teachers—our families by blood and our families by faith—we may begin to hear the prayers in every arm that held us, every hand that brushed hair over our ears, every voice that urged us on, every hymn that called us home.

When we claim a hope and a future, when we look toward the kingdom, every move we make to build it becomes a prayer. Every action we take anchored in the assurance of things hoped for but not yet seen is a declaration of faith and a call for deliverance.

Tomorrow, Saturday October 5th, is the International Day of Action for Palestine. Tomorrow, millions of people across the world will act in their streets, workplaces, families, and communities for the sake of our neighbours in Gaza. They will try to remind the world that it has been almost a year of constant siege, bombardment, and starvation, that in the last few weeks we have seen how willing Israel is to let this violence spread into the West Bank, Lebanon, and throughout the Middle East, and that it shouldn’t be so hard to stop the bombs from falling. If things look dark, it’s because they are, and I don’t blame anyone for their discouragement or despair. But I hope by now we Christians know that a hopeless situation is no reason to give up.

When I think of despair, I think of that first Easter morning, and the women—Mary, Mary, and Salome—who went to Jesus’ tomb. In their grief, they could have stayed home, closed all the windows, and tried to think of anything else. Instead, they got up, got together, and went to do the only thing they could think to do: bring some spices to honour their dead friend. It was a small gesture, meaningless in the face of reality—their kindness would not bring him back—and more than that, they had no plan at all for the massive stone that kept him from them. They went anyway. I hope you remember how that story ended.

There is a stone of iron and cement and barbed wire and empire that keeps us from our neighbours in Palestine, and I am certainly no more prepared than those women were to roll it away. But in the name of a God who didn’t see that as much an obstacle at all, I’m going to put my feet on and march down anyway. I will meet my fellow mourners, we will bring our hands and our voices and our creativity and our courage to honour our neighbours, and we will pray for resurrection.

I hope you’ll join me.

First published October 4, 2024

Pray with yo
Pray with y

Cry Out!

*Lord of **justice** we pray for justice like a rushing river, tearing down the feeble walls of oppression and watering the soil for a better world. We pray for people around the world, from the leaders in high places to those with their backs bowed in heavy labour, to rise and take courageous action to right the many wrongs inflicted on our neighbours in Palestine. We pray that we will never forget Hind Rajab, Muhammad Bhar, Refaat Alareer, Majed Abu Maraheel, Nagham Abu Samra, Shireen Abu Akleh, Aser and Aseel Abu Al-Qumsan, Yousef Abu Rabea, Murad & Mohammad Na’ja, Tala Abu Ajwa, Fatima Abdullah, and all our other neighbours who have been stolen from us. We pray that we will face the forces that killed them with boldness and bring an end to all colonialism and imperialism.*

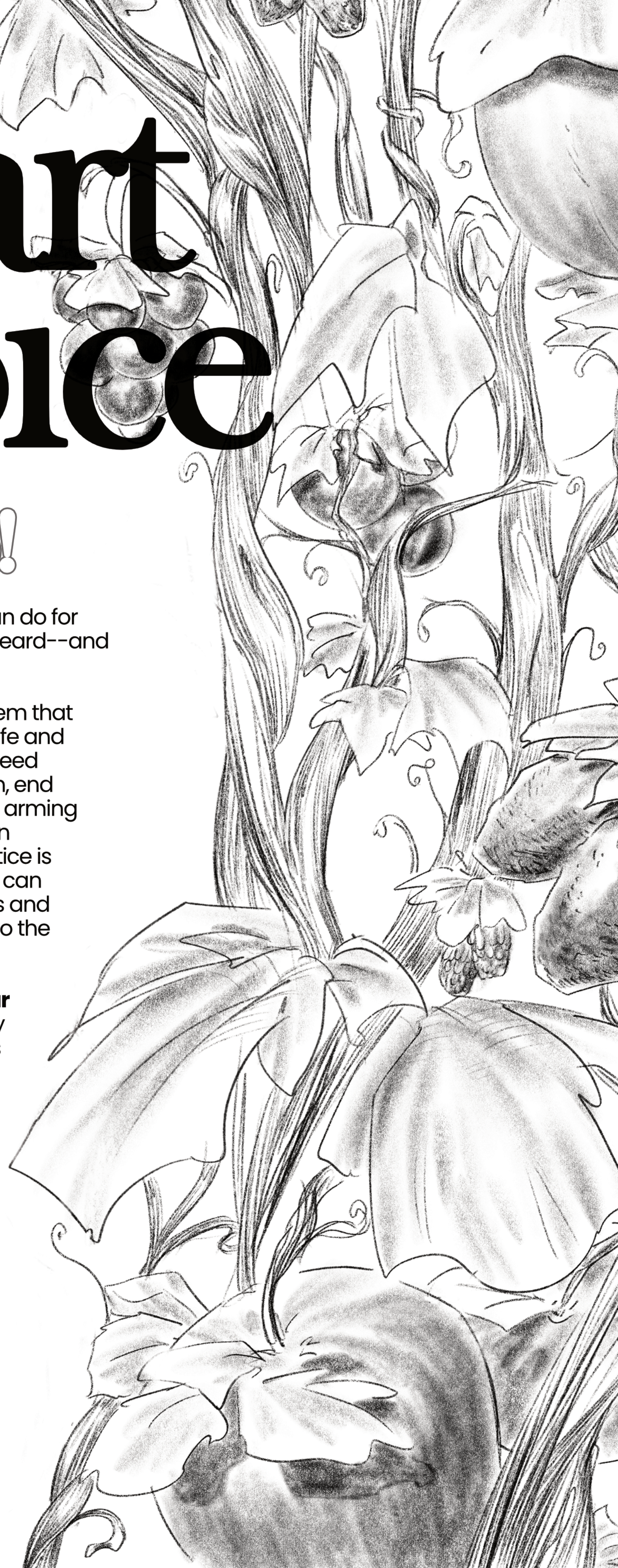
*Lord of **truth**, we pray for everyday revelation: for the tireless work of journalists like Bisan Owda, Motaz Azaiza, and Mariam Barghouti who risk their lives to share the truth with us; for the writers, artists, and athletes like Dr. Refaat Alareer, Khaled Juma, Raja Shehadeh, Waseem Abu Sal, Nagham Abu Samra, and Majed Abu Maraheel. who use their talents to help us see our neighbours stories and struggles in a new light; for faith leaders like Rev. Munther Isaac who call us into fearless truth telling, guided by a spirit of power, love and sound judgement (2 Timothy 1:7).*

*Lord of **comfort and compassion**, we pray that you would hold all our neighbours in Palestine in the safety of your wings. Be with all of our neighbours for whom trauma is a constant companion, and who have not had even a moment’s respite. We pray for all held hostage by the Israeli miliary, and rejoice for those like Mohammed Abu Salmiya and Muhammad Al Kurdi who are now free; we pray that you walk with them, and that they may find recovery. We pray for those who we love from afar and whose lives seem so fragile in the face of empire, those like Renad Attallah, Hussam Al-Attar, Samia Anwar, and all of Gaza’s children. We pray as well for all who work to bring respite and hope to our neighbours, like Hamada Shaqoura, Noor Nassar, Yousef Abu Rabea, Leena Almadhoun, the workers of Ele Elna Elak and Thamra, and of course all the healthcare workers, including Dr. Mohammad Abu Salmiya and Muhammad Al-Kurdi; multiply their efforts, we pray, and grant them the comfort they seek to bring to others.*

*Lord of **peace**, we pray for a peace that is greater than silence. We pray for peace in the spirit of shalom, a peace of healing and restoration and right relationships. We pray that our neighbours like Isam would have the right to return to the lands so long taken from them. We pray that the lands stewarded by the Kisiya family would bloom with new harvests of faith. We pray that, soon, the streets of Palestine will be a place where children like Tala can play safely without fear of bombs or bullets.*

*Lord of **hope**, we pray for things we can’t see right now and for things we can barely imagine. Grant us eyes to see your promises fulfilled and hands to work for your kingdom, here in our lifetimes. Let us see a day when all who live in the land from the river to the sea will know freedom, justice, and equity. Let the dreams of Gaza’s children be the realities of our tomorrow. Give us the faith to believe it can be so. Let Palestine be free.*

our heart
our voice



Speak Up!

One of the most important things we as citizens can do for our neighbours in Palestine is to make our voices heard--and I don't just mean by voting.

We need to **call on our elected officials**, remind them that our neighbours in Palestine deserve their rights to life and liberty just as much as the rest of us, and that we need them to act decisively to end the Israeli occupation, end the current genocide in Gaza and the unmitigated arming of Israel that's supporting it, and support Palestinian sovereignty over their lands. Remind them that justice is the only way to real peace. If you're Canadian, you can find your MP by visiting ourcommons.ca/members and searching by your postal code. In the US you can do the same by visiting usa.gov/elected-officials.

You can also make change by **speaking up in your local community**! Ask your **church leaders** to pray for Palestine, combat Christian Zionism, and use its unified voice to speak on behalf of Palestinian freedom. You can also have **conversations with your friends and loved ones**. I know sometimes those close to us can be the hardest to talk to; sharing the story of one of the neighbours you just met in this issue is a great place to start!

Lastly, it's important to **raise our voices loudly and publicly**, so that all our neighbours can hear us. Over the past year, people like you and me all around the world have been taking to the streets in record numbers to march for an end to the genocide and for Palestinian freedom. Keep an eye out for when organizers like the Palestinian Youth Movement post about upcoming marches and then add your voice to the collective call for justice!

Organize!

Renad

Samia

If we want anything to get better for our neighbours in Palestine, we can' t do it alone. Luckily, there are hundreds, thousands, even millions of people of conscience living near you who also want peace and justice, and are willing to work for it. Some organizations already doing great work, that you could connect with, include:

- **Christians for a Free Palestine,** a US and Toronto-based network of Christians across denominations working "to use our public voice and our collective power to advocate for peace, challenge Christian Zionism, and demand an immediate ceasefire." Find more info at ChristiansForAFreePalestine.com. The Toronto chapter was recently founded and is looking for more Christians to help grow solidarity north of the border--visit @christiansforafreepalestineto for more info.

- **The Palestinian Youth Movement,** an international grassroots network of Palestinian youth and their allies working in a variety of ways to support Palestinian freedom through their communities. Learn more at PalestinianYouthMovement.com, or on Instagram @palestinianyouthmovement. If you're in Toronto, visit @pymtoronto on Instagram.

- **World Beyond War**, a "a global nonviolent movement to end war and establish a just and sustainable peace." It focuses on education, advocacy, and actions to bring attention to the machinery of warfare in our communities and work to disrupt it. Learn more at WorldBeyondWar.org.

Other great ways to organize include starting a Palestine reading group at your church (one of Rev. Isaac's books would be a great first choice!) or getting together with other people in your neighbourhood, particularly your federal riding (if you're in Toronto, there are already riding groups you can join--check out @toronto4directory on Instagram!).

If you're having trouble getting connected, feel free to send me a message on Instagram @svencomicsart or by email to sven@svencomics.ca. I'd be happy to help you out!

Pray with

Pray with y

Donate!

You can donate directly to the **GoFundMe fundraisers** of two of our neighbours:

Renad: gofundme.com/f/hope-for-nourhan-renad-from-gaza-your-support-matters

Samia: gofundme.com/f/sbwg7r-help-ahmed-and-his-family-in-gaza

You can also help individual families that I haven't been able to feature yet by going to GazaFunds.com, a site which highlights fundraisers.

You can donate to **grassroots organizations** currently working on the ground in Gaza. This includes **Thamra** (thamra.org), **Ele Elna Elak** (eleelnaelak.org), and Noor Nassar's **Schools Without Borders** (instagram.com/schools.without.borders), which were highlighted in this issue. Other great organizations include Gaza Soup Kitchen (gazasoupkitchen.org) and the Sameer Project (instagram.com/thesameerproject), Connecting Humanity (connecting-humanity.org) and Crips for eSims for Gaza (cripsforesimsforgaza.org).

You can donate to **large aid organizations** that serve our Palestinian neighbours. I typically prefer the first two options, because your money can become diluted in some large organizations, but a few with very good track records include the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (aka UNRWA, unrwa.org), the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (aka PCRF, pcrf.net), and World Central Kitchen (wck.org).

your hands your feet

More Information

In each live update of *Imago Palestina* (posted on ImagoPalestina.Substack.com), I provide a handful of resources that either I used in my research or I think would be useful or interesting to you, based on the topic at hand. I've reproduced this exhaustive list below, but I also want to take a moment to highlight some particularly useful resources.

See, one of the most common things I hear folks say when I bring up our neighbours in Palestine is that "it's so complicated. While it's true that any event--any person for that matter--has universes of complexity and nuance, that doesn't mean that there isn't a lot of very accessible information to inform us, nor that certain aspects--like Israel's human rights abuses, the illegality of the occupation, or the lived experiences of our neighbours--aren't well documented and quite simple to explain.

When people say "it's so complicated," what they really mean is that they feel powerless, that they feel overwhelmed, and that they don't know who to trust. But knowledge is power, the more you learn the more confident you will feel, and here are some great trustworthy sources to start with:

Al Jazeera News

...for up to date news coverage with reporters in Palestine

Institute for Palestine Studies

...for the leading academic resource on Palestine

B'Tselem

...for insights from an Israeli human right's group

Across the Divide Podcast

...for conversations between Palestinian Christians and their siblings in faith from around the world

The BDS Movement

...for information on the biggest non-violent response to Israeli colonialsm

+972 Magazine

...for high-quality independent journalism from Israel-Palestine

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)

...for policy analysis and actions Canadians can take for justice and peace

The Unsettled Podcast

...for personal stories and reporting from Jewish neighbours lifting up Palestinian voices

Jewish Currents

...for expert discussions on society and culture from a Jewish perspective, with a strong focus on Palestine

Palestinian Youth Movement

...for a network of Palestinian Youth and allies working in cities around the world for Palestinian freedom

...and all of the Palestinian journalists that you met in this issue!

And now for all the "More Information" from each section:

Isam Hammad

> "The Great March," "Isam Hamad: What Sort of Life is This?," "An Update from Isam Hamad" episodes at The Unsettled Podcast
>
> "After a year of protests in Gaza: 11 Military Police investigations, 1 charade" at B'Tselem
>
> "And now for the whitewashing" at B'Tselem

Hind Rajab

> "'I'm so scared, please come': Hind Rajab, five, found dead in Gaza 12 days after cry for help" at The Guardian
>
> "The Killing of Hind Rajab" forensic investigation by Forensic Architecture
>
> "Gaza's Missing Children" at Save the Children

Bisan Owda

> "World Press Freedom Day: Gaza conflict deadliest for journalists" at Al Jazeera
>
> "RSF files third complaint with ICC about Israeli war crimes against journalists in Gaza" by Reporters sans Frontières/Reporters without Borders

Hussam

> "'Gaza's Newton' is lighting up his family's tent" video at Al Jazeera
>
> "'Newton of Gaza': Palestinian teen lights up Gaza's shelters using wind energy" at Middle East Monitor
>
> "No Profits from Palestinian Death" campaign at World Beyond War

Motaz Azaiza

> "Photojournalist Motaz Azaiza: 'The ghosts of Gaza follow me everywhere'" at The Guardian
>
> "Palestinians in Gaza using eSim cards to get around communications blackout" at The Guardian
>
> Connecting-Humanity.org

Rev. Munther Isaac

> The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Narrative of Lament and Hope by Munther Isaac
>
> "Gaza: Where is God? Where is the Church?" with Rev Dr Munther Isaac, an episode of the Inverse Podcast
>
> "United Methodist Church votes to divest from Israel bonds" at Mondoweiss
>
> "US Presbyterian Church divests from Israel bonds, condemns Christian Zionism" at Middle East Monitor

Dr. Mohammad Abu Salmiya

> "Israel frees hospital chief with prisons 'full' of Gaza captives" at Al

Jazeera

“Medical voices against Dr Muhammad Abu Salmiya's detention” by Jessica Smith-Amara, published in The Lancet

“Systemic torture and inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prison facilities since October 7, 2023” joint report by The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual and Physicians for Human Rights Israel

“Jailed without charge: How Israel holds thousands of Palestinian prisoners” at Al Jazeera

Muhammad Bhar

[1] “Gaza civilians afraid to leave home after bombing of ‘safe routes’” at The Guardian

[2] “The Take: In Gaza, schools and ‘safe zones’ under Israeli attack” audio at Al Jazeera

[3] “Hundreds of Palestine supporters protest Israeli real estate event at New Jersey synagogue” at The Guardian

“Gaza man with Down's syndrome attacked by IDF dog and left to die, mother tells BBC” at the BBC. NOTE: While this is the first and most comprehensive coverage of Muhammad’s story, it was widely criticized on first publication for (among other things) the misrepresentative original headline, “The lonely death of Gaza man with Down’s syndrome,” which suggests a passivity that the actual event clearly didn’t exemplify. The title was changed after backlash, and you can read more about the criticisms here:

“Activists decry BBC coverage of Israel's killing of Palestinian man with Down's syndrome in Gaza” at The New Arab

Israel-Palestine war: The harsh reality of disabled people trying to survive war at Middle East Eye

“Israeli parents of children with special needs protest death of young Palestinian” at Haaretz

Majd Mashharawi

“Energy (Gaza, ep. 4)” episode of the Unsettled Podcast

“Clearing Gaza of almost 40m tonnes of war rubble will take years, says UN” at The Guardian

“Gaza infrastructure damages estimated at $18.5bn in UN-World Bank report” at Al Jazeera

“Who’s responsible for Gaza’s infrastructure crisis?” report by Gisha - Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement

Dr. Refaat Alareer

[1] “Israeli Strike on Refaat al-Areer Apparently Deliberate” at Euro-Med Monitor

[2] “ICC prosecutor seeks arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Hamas officials” at Al Jazeera

[3] Netanyahu’s claims before the US Congress: Facts or falsehoods?” at Al Jazeera

We Are Not Numbers can be found at WeAreNotNumbers.org

“In The Face of Lifelong Terror, Gaza Speaks Truth To Power” essay by Dr. Refaat Alareer (where the quote in the third last paragraph came from)

“If I Must Die” poem by Dr. Refaat Alareer (read this to see why I chose the symbol of a kite for his portrait)

“My Child Asks, ‘Can Israel Destroy Our Building if the Power Is Out?’” essay by Dr. Refaat Alareer

Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine, Edited by Dr. Refaat Alareer

Majed Abu Maraheel

“Palestinian athletes to honour legacy of late long-distance runner Majed Abu Maraheel at Paris Olympics” at The New Arab

“Police Impersonator Attended Ceremonies” at The Spokesman-Review *(this is a very strange title because it’s an omnibus article about the 1996 Olympics, but it’s where Majed’s quote comes from)*

“Israel takes control of Rafah crossing, Gaza’s lifeline: What’s going on?” at Al Jazeera

“300 Palestinian Sports Clubs and Civil Society Organizations: #BanIsrael from the Olympics“ at the BDS Movement

“Israel at the Olympics. The Genocide Games.” at the BDS Movement

Nagham Abu Samra

“Nagham Abu Samra: Palestine karate champion, victim of Israel’s war on Gaza” at Al Jazeera

“‘Sport is part of our resistance’: Palestine football chief Jibril Rajoub” at Al Jazeera

“Female Gazan karate champion loses leg in Israeli strike” at The National (UAE)

Waseem Abu Sal

[1] “The Palestinians heading to Paris to represent their people” at the BBC

[2] “Post of Israeli Olympic flagbearer signing bombs for Gaza reemerges, triggering pro-Palestine backlash” at the New Arab

“Paris 2024: Debut of Waseem Abu Sal, Palestine's first Olympic boxer” at Inside the Games

“The long history of Israel’s war on the Palestinian flag” at +972 Magazine

Shireen Abu Akleh

“‘They were shooting directly at the journalists’: New evidence suggests Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in targeted attack by Israeli forces” at CNN

“Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war” at the Committee to Protect Journalists

“Israel Defense Forces apologizes for death of Al Jazeera’s Shireen Abu Akleh for the first time” at CNN

“Israeli police beat mourners at funeral of slain Palestinian journalist” at Reuters

“The family of slain Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh demands justice” at NPR

Press release, “UNESCO Director-General condemns killings of journalists Ismail Al Ghoul and Ramy Al Refee in Palestine,” by UNESCO

“Shireen Abu Akleh: The Extrajudicial Killing of a Journalist” investigation by Forensic Architecture

I can’t unfortunately link to the document containing Lina Abu Akleh’s statement for World Day of Prayer, as it’s not a public document, but you can learn more about WDP 2024 at worlddayofprayer.net/palestine-2024.html

The Ones We Don’t See

[1] “$95 Million In New Canadian Military Goods Could Flow To Israel By 2025” at the Maple

[2] “Canadian Military Buying $43 Million Of Israeli Missiles Used In Gaza Attacks” at the Maple

[3] “Parliament votes to end arms exports to Israel in watered-down motion: CJPME“ statement at Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

“Israeli attack on Gaza school renews calls for US to end support for Israel” at Al Jazeera

“US to provide $3.5bn more in military aid to Israel amid war on Gaza” at Al Jazeera

"Israel returns 'decomposed' bodies of 89 Palestinians to Gaza" at Al Jazeera

"'Where there's bodies, I go to search,' says Palestinian woman looking for missing son, father" at Al Jazeera

Muhammad Al-Kurdi

[1] "The Killing of Hind Rajab" investigation by Forensic Architecture

[2] "Strikes, raids and incursions: Seven months of relentless attacks on healthcare in Palestine" report by Doctors without Borders

"Administrative Detention" explainer at B'tselem

"Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps" report by B'tselem. If you read one link today, pick this one.

"Inside the Base Where Israel Has Detained Thousands of Gazans" at The New York Times

"Strapped down, blindfolded, held in diapers: Israeli whistleblowers detail abuse of Palestinians in shadowy detention center" at CNN

"Detention and alleged ill-treatment of detainees from Gaza during Israel-Hamas War" report by UNRWA

"Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza" statement by Amnesty International

"Video of Sexual Abuse at Israeli Prison Is Just Latest Evidence Sde Teiman Is a Torture Site" at The Intercept

Hamada Shaqoura

[1] "When Israeli soldiers shot at hungry Palestinians" at Al Jazeera

[2] "UN experts declare famine has spread throughout Gaza strip" press release by the UN

[3] "Israeli protesters block aid trucks destined for Gaza" at the BBC

[4] "Israel attacked aid workers 'systematically, car by car,' charity founder says, as fury builds over deadly strike" at CNN

Hamada's Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (all @hamadashoo)

Watermelon Relief's Instagram (@watermelonrelief) and Twitter (@watermelongaza)

World Central Kitchen's (wck.org)

"Hamada Shaqoura: The Gaza food blogger nurturing displaced Palestinian children from his tent" at The New Arab (introductory quote taken from here)

"This Gaza man makes videos cooking aid food for children in displacement camps" at CBC

Aser & Aseel

[1] "Strikes, raids and incursions: Seven months of relentless attacks on healthcare in Palestine" report by Doctors Without Borders

[2] "The bloodiest face of its genocide: Israel has killed 2,100 Palestinian infants and toddlers in Gaza" at Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor

[3] "Aser Name Meaning" at Muslim Names

[4] "Asil (name)" at Wikipedia

"'All that was left was bones': Palestinian father mourns newborn twins killed by Israeli army" at Middle East Eye (this is where Mohammad's quote comes from)

"Four-day-old twins killed in Gaza by Israeli airstrike as father registered births" at The Guardian

Do Not Tire of Doing Good

Learn more about the Arms Embargo Now campaign at ArmsEmbargoNow.ca

You can read the Parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18:1-8 and the Parable of the Mustard Seed in Matthew 13:31-32

"Canada must block $83.7M transfer of explosives to Israel: Peace groups" statement by CJPME

"U.S. Names Quebec Contractor In Newly Approved Arms Sale To Israel" at The Maple

"Canada To Host Tests Of Israeli Arms Tech Used On Palestinians" at The Maple

"Trudeau Government Authorized $28.5 Million Of New Military Exports To Israel Since October" at The Maple

"$95 Million In New Canadian Military Goods Could Flow To Israel By 2025" at The Maple

Yousef & Leena

Thamra's Website (thamra.org) and Instagram (@thamra_org)

"Questions and Answers on Israel's Use of White Phosphorus in Gaza and Lebanon" at Human Right's Watch

"On the Origins of "They Tried to Bury Us, They Didn't Know We Were Seeds"" at Hyperallergic

The Volunteers of Ele Elna Elak

Ele Elna Elak's Instagram (@ela_elna_elak) and Gofundme (gofundme.com/f/EleElnaElakFood)

"The Siege of Gaza's Water" at Centre for Strategic & International Studies

"Gaza: Lack of clean water brings disease and suffering" at Doctors without Borders

"Israel using water as weapon of war as Gaza supply plummets by 94%, creating deadly health catastrophe: Oxfam" at Oxfam

Murad & Mohammad Na'ja

[1] You can find UN Secretary-General António Guterres' tweet at @antonioguterres, posted Aug. 28, 2024, 8:44 pm

"Israeli drone strike kills Palestinian brothers in massive northern West Bank incursion" statement by Defense for Children International - Palestine

"'Operation al-Aqsa Flood' Day 328: Israeli Foreign Minister calls West Bank invasion 'a war in every sense'" at Mondoweiss

"Israel presses on with assault on occupied West Bank for third day" at Al Jazeera

"Action Alert: Israel's Massive Military Attack on the Northern West Bank" statement by Al-Haq, West Bank human rights group

Twitter thread by Doctors without Borders commenting on Israel's obstructions of the West Bank healthcare network

"West Bank: In the shadows of war; Increased violence and restrictions" report by Doctors without Borders *(Note: a few months old, included for context)*

Noor Nassar

[1] "Timeline: Israel's deadly seven-day raid in occupied West Bank's Jenin" at Al Jazeera

Noor's Instagram (@noor._.nassar)

Schools without Borders' Instagram (@schools.without.borders), YouTube channel (@schools.without.borders), TikTok (@schools_without_borders), and fundraiser (gofundme.com/f/escuelas-sin-fronteras-gaza-educacion)

"This Palestinian woman created a mobile school for children in Gaza" video at Al Jazeera

"Schools Without Borders: The new initiative strengthening education for Gaza's children" at the New Arab

"Back to school - but not for the 625,000 students of Gaza" at Al Jazeera

Renad Attallah

[1] "Israel's intensifying attacks on Gaza schools" at Al Jazeera

Renad's Instagram (@renadfromgaza) and fundraiser (gofundme.com/f/hope-for-nourhan-renad-from-gaza-your-support-matters)

"Meet Renad, a 10-year-old chef charming the internet with

- cooking videos amid Israel's war on Gaza” video by Al Jazeera
- “10-year-old shines a light on life in Gaza through cooking videos” at CTV
- “Scholasticide must not be normalised” at Al Jazeera (for more context regarding Israel’s attacks on schools)

Tala Abu Ajwa

- “Killed in her pink roller skates, a Palestinian girl’s photo in Gaza goes viral” at NPR (Tala’s father, Hussam’s quotes at the beginning and end of the post come from this article)
- “War on Gaza: Israeli strike kills children playing in the street” at Middle East Eye
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* at UNICEF.org

Khaled Juma

- Text of “Oh Rascal Children Of Gaza” showcased at Jewish Voice for Labour
- Khaled’s Facebook (@khaledjuma) and Twitter (@khaledjuma65)
- “Palestine” video essay by Shaun
- For more context on the summer of 2014:
  - “50 Days: More than 500 Children: Facts and figures on fatalities in Gaza, Summer 2014” at B’Tselem
  - “The 2014 Gaza War” at Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question
  - “Israel/Palestine: Unlawful Israeli Airstrikes Kill Civilians” at Human Rights Watch
- Figures references:
  - “‘Operation al-Aqsa Flood’ Day 341: Israel bombs two displacement shelters in Gaza, kills 11 Palestinians in West Bank” at Mondoweiss (for up-to-date casualty figures)
  - “How many children live in the State of Palestine?” at UNICEF

Samia Anwar

- Samia’s Instagram (@samia20032) and GoFundMe page (gofundme.com/f/sbwg7r-help-ahmed-and-his-family-in-gaza) (it’s listed under her family member Ahmed’s name, but don’t worry, it’s the right one. You can see her in the head picture, second from the left)
- GazaFunds.com
- Watermelon Buddies’ Instagram (@wearewatermelonbuddies)

Mariam Barghouti

- [1] “What bombs did Israel use against the al-Mawasi ‘safe zone’ in Gaza?” at Al Jazeera
- [2] “What is al-Mawasi and why did Israel attack a ‘safe zone’?” at The Guardian
- [3] “20 more dead, 450 injured as new round of explosions rocks Lebanon: Health officials” at ABC News
- [4] “Opinion: The ‘brilliant’ way Israel kills innocents” at Al Jazeera
- [5] “Israeli attacks on Lebanon in maps and charts: Live tracker” at Al Jazeera
- [6] “Israel raids and shuts down Al Jazeera’s bureau in Ramallah in the West Bank” at the Associated Press

Alice Kisiya

- Alice's Instagram and the Save Al Makhrour campaign’s Instagram
- “Defending Al-Makhrour: A Story of Faith, Land, and Resistance” podcast by Across the Divide
- The Al-Makhrour learning hub at the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity & Sustainability of Bethlehem University
- “The Land of Olives and Vines: Our Heritage, Our Future – Al Makhrour Valley” at Balasan Initiative
- “The al-Makhrour area – damage to businesses, leisure and agriculture” at B’tselem (a little old, but provides some good context)
- “Fact sheet: Masafer Yatta communities at risk of forcible transfer | June 2022” at UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Fatima Abdullah

- “The ‘brilliant’ way Israel kills innocents” at Al Jazeera
- “Fatima Abdullah, 9, killed in Israel's pager attack, buried in Lebanon” at TRT World
- “The Escalating Regional War” podcast episode from On the Nose
- “Timeline: The key moments that led to Iran’s missile attacks on Israel” at Al Jazeera
- “Israel concealed explosives inside batteries of pagers sold to Hezbollah, Lebanese officials say” at CNN
- “20 more dead, 450 injured as new round of explosions rocks Lebanon: Health officials” at ABC News
- “What does a war with Lebanon and Iran mean for Gaza?” at Mondoweiss
- “Israel’s Full-Scale War on Lebanon is Already Here” at Inkstick
- “Iran launches hundreds of ballistic missiles at Israel in retaliation for Haniyeh and Nasrallah assassinations” at Mondoweiss
- “As Helene barrels into the Gulf Coast, FEMA faces shortfall for longer-term recovery” at Marketplace
- “Israel says it has secured $8.7 billion U.S. aid package” at Reuters

Mama G’s Palestine Reading List

Historical & Analytical

The Question of Palestine 🐦
by Edward W. Said

On Palestine
by Noam Chomsky & Ilan Pappe

The Biggest Prison on Earth
by Ilan Pappe

The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine
by Ilan Pappe

Except for Palestine
by Marc Lamont Hill & Mitchell Plitnick

The Shortest History of Israel and Palestine
by Michael Scott-Baumann

The Case for Palestine
by Dan Kovalik

What Does Israel Fear from Palestine? 🐦
Raja Shehadeh

Personal & Poetic

Palestinian Walks 🐦
by Raja Shehadeh

Where the Line is Drawn 🐦
by Raja Shehadeh

Looking for Palestine 🐦
by Najla Said

I Saw Ramallah 🐦
by Mourid Barghouti

Pay No Heed to the Rockets
by Marcello Di Cintio

🐦 *Written by a Palestinian author*

Thank you so much for reading this volume of Imago Palestina!

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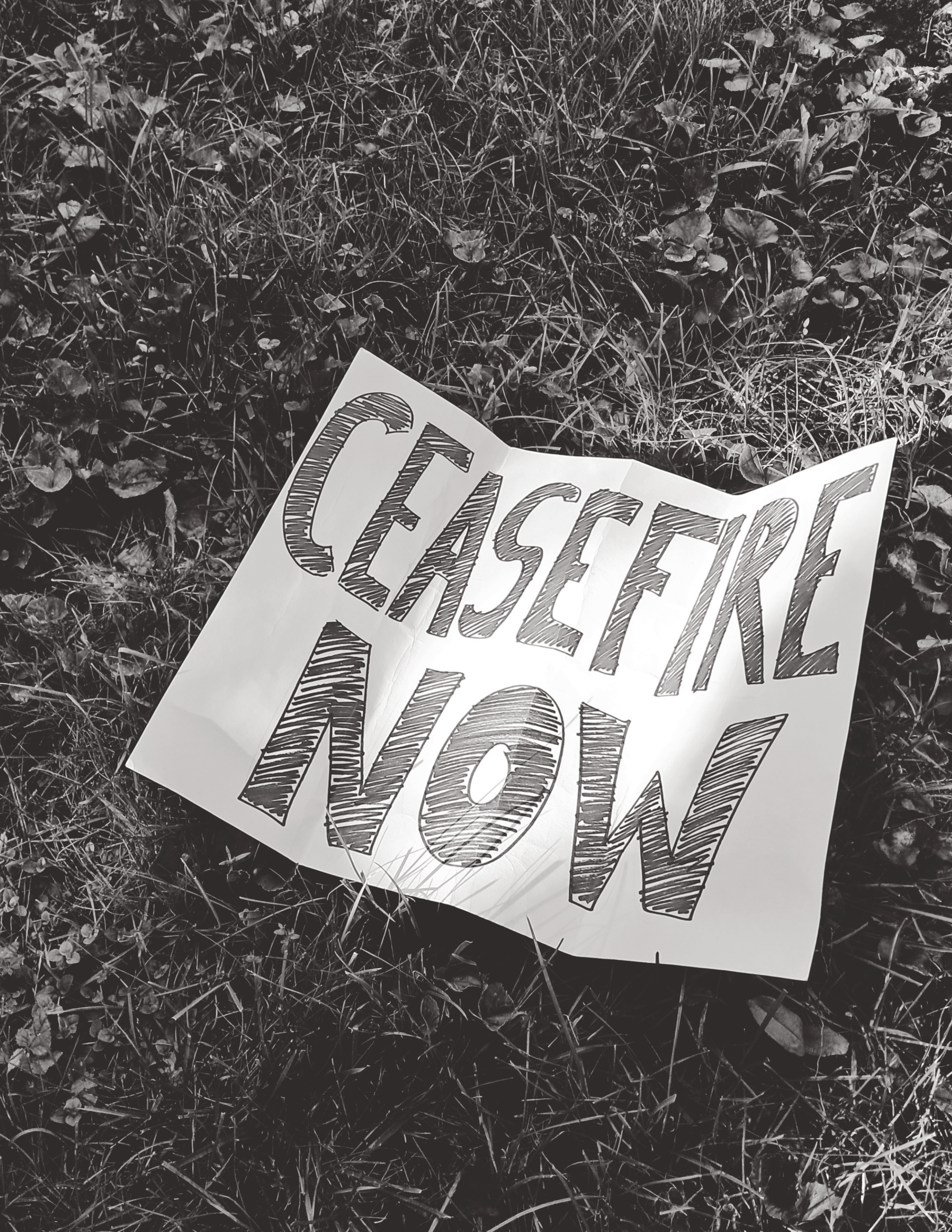
Rest assured, no profit will be made from Imago Palestina, and all funds will go to getting our neighbours stories in front of the people who need to read them (and supporting our neighbours directly, when and where we can).

Thanks so much! :)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